something of the wolf about you

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something of the wolf about you

by nbcravenstag

Summary

Will Graham thought the Rougarou was just a Louisiana legend until he his chance encounter with one that resulted in a bite when he was twenty-three. Now cursed, he is a slave to his instincts every full moon where he kills to starve off the hunger and the ache in his teeth. He gets used to it.

Over a decade later, he shares a breakfast of eggs and very... familiar-tasting sausage with Hannibal Lecter, and he begins to wonder if he really is cursed, or if his damnation is actually a Becoming.

_____

Or, the highly requested full-length Rougarou Will Graham fic. For those unfamiliar, the Rougarou is Louisiana's werewolf. Can be read as a standalone, though the other scenes I've posted will be referenced in later chapters.

Notes

Hi everyone!
So many people have asked me to write a full-length Rougarou Will fic, so I've decided to finally write one. This will be a bit long and will cover the majority of the show. I have a lot planned and I'm so excited to share with you all! (The title is from Doctor Who S2E2 Tooth and Claw. It's something the werewolf says to Rose, hinting at her being the Bad Wolf.)
Please let me know what you liked, what you didn't like, and if you have anything you would really like to see from this fic. If it's not something I think fits in this story, I would be happy to do a oneshot too!
Anyway, enough rambling. I hope you guys enjoy!
All my love,
Canary

IMPORTANT PS: The ending of this first chapter has a very brief, non-explicit explanation of an attempted sexual assault.

See the end of the work for more notes

Summer 2003

July 12th, 2003

For the first time in a very long while, Will Graham feels calm.

Nothing compares to the smell of the bayou, the lilies, the earth, and the water, it all creates a unique, nostalgic fragrance that curls around his heart and lulls his mind to a peaceful place. His little campsite in the woods is close to the creek so he doesn't have far to go if he needs food, and being so off the grid is just what he's needed.

After eight grueling months of nearly nonstop working in NOPD's homicide division, Will finally decided it was time to take a vacation. His captain had more or less begged him to take a holiday after seeing the bags under his eyes, so Will packed his stuff and got in the car the first moment he could. Sure, he's in the swamps, but that's part of the charm.

With his tent propped up and his fishing gear ready for the morning, Will gets his camping mat set up outside in the sun, changes into his comfy lounge clothes, and sprawls out unceremoniously under the rays like a cat. He hadn't planned much for his first day. Enjoy the heat, enjoy the sun, and fucking relax.

As the forest around him echoes with the sounds of life and the sun beats down on his face, he smiles to himself. Enjoy the heat, enjoy the sun, fucking relax. Sounds like a good fucking plan.

July 13th, 2003 — 9:14 PM

It's warm enough that Will doesn't really need a fire, but he built one anyway just for the light and comfort of the hearth. He sits in the little chair he's brought with him and lounges peacefully. Will can't actually think of the last time he allowed himself to relax like this. He's not really good at relaxing. His mind is often too loud and filled with horrible things that every time he shuts his eyes it's like he's stepped onto an active minefield.

This is nice though. Really nice.

He would have enjoyed this time better with a dog (or several), but his shitty apartment in the city doesn't allow pets. He'd love a dog. He should really move out of the city. He's not suited for the constant hustle and bustle, the traffic, and the crowded streets. Will likes quietness.

Behind him, the sound of something rustling through the underbrush startles him out of his thoughts and he turns towards the noise. He scans the forest, trying to adjust his eyes to the darkness as he searches for the source.

Nothing.

Wearily, Will shifts back around in his seat, but he doesn't close his eyes.

Louisiana isn't known for large animals in the swamps, besides alligators, but whatever made the noise was definitely not that.

Will takes a deep breath in through his nose and lets it out. "Calm down. Don't freak yourself out." He orders.

He's fine. Everything is fine.

Will tries to relax by keeping his eyes on the fire, but he can't shake the feeling that something is watching him.

July 13th, 2003, 11:36 PM

It's the looming dread that wakes him from a dead sleep. Will opens his eyes to the blackness of the forest; the fire long since dead, and though he's certain he's alone in the clearing, there is a presence around him, floating through the trees on the edges of his sanctuary, just out of sight.

Will is not alone in the woods.

His heart is already hammering against his ribs, echoing in his ears and making it impossible to figure out what sounds are only in his head and what he's actually hearing, so he does the only thing he can do.

Very, *very* slowly and as silently as he can, Will shifts his body out of the chair to a crouched position. He winces when the cheap metal of the chair grinds out a protest, but he keeps going.

Behind the treeline to his left, something moves.

Will whips around to face that direction, moving closer to the shotgun he brought with him for safety, and tucks it safely in his arms, ready to shoot.

From out of the trees to his right comes a deep, rumbling growl. A warning.

Will feels the blood drain from his face as he whips around again and aims for the tree line. He's shaking now and the gun is unsteady. He swears under his breath, trying to breathe, trying to calm himself, trying to fucking *see.*

The rustling gets louder and suddenly the growl is coming from behind him and he follows the sound with his rifle. He's being circled, he realizes, and the circle is becoming smaller and smaller as whatever animal this is plays its games. Will is good at games.

Another loud, deep snarl from in front of him sounds off, and Will takes his opportunity.

He raises the rifle, listens to his Captain's voice as he aims, and he fires. Then, he runs in the opposite direction.

He hit something, whatever it is, if the loud bellowing is anything to go by, but Will doesn't look back to whatever it is because he feels the thundering of the ground beneath his boots as the now-enraged beast takes off behind him.

Will runs as fast as his legs will carry him. His muscles and lungs are burning so hot it feels like he has ice crystals in his body, but when he stumbles he slams the palm of his hand into the earth to release some of the violence squirming behind his teeth and forces himself to keep going. He hears the creature behind him, large and charging at him, fueled by the chase, and he chooses to zig-zag his movements to throw it off.

He doesn't look back at what it is.

He runs and runs and runs, keeping a hold on his gun as he retreats. He isn't going down without a fight.

But unfortunately, the universe is cruel, and in the darkness he can't quite see where he's going. Will's foot makes contact with a tree root and with a cry of fear, he's sent sprawled on his belly and the gun slides away from him.

The ground beneath him trembles with the weight of the approaching monster and Will scrambles for his gun. He flips himself over onto his back and takes aim, but his heart seizes up with terror.

Light from the full moon is pouring down making eerie white-blue pools on the earth, illuminating the beast that stalks him as it steps into the light. It is large, bipedal, and covered in thick black fur while saliva drips from its open maw. Deep brown eyes that seem to glow pierce through his resolve. This isn't possible. This cannot be real.

Oh, but it is. Will can feel it in his heart that he isn't hallucinating or dreaming. Will Graham is a Louisiana native, even if he didn't spend all of his life here. He knows what stories parents tell their children to keep them in line. He knows what scary things lurk in the nightmares of the people in the bayou, although these fears remain dormant when our eyes are open because they cannot possibly happen in the real world.

How could he have gotten it so wrong?

He aims his weapon at the beast's head. "You don't scare me." He says, his voice tense and shaking, but still bold and confident. "I know what you are."

The Rougarou growls, then throws its large head back to howl at the moon. It chills his blood, but he takes the distraction.

Will fires off another round, just to see the bullet disappear into the wolf's flesh. It won't be a fatal shot, but it'll slow the creature down. It howls in pain as blood trickles from the wound and it's sent fumbling backward, and Will takes the opportunity to sprint again.

Come on, come on, come ON! Will pushes himself as fast as he can as the Rougarou recovers from its wound. He tears through the trees, the vines, thorns, and stray branches cutting into his palms deep enough to draw blood. Panic grips his heart tight. In legend, Rougarou can smell blood.

Will tries a new tactic then, swerving quickly to the side and doubling back towards his campsite. The creature, taken by surprise, slides and skids across the damp forest floor, and Will doesn't look back to see how far away it is, he just keeps running. If he can just get to his truck, he'll be safe. Heart pounding, sweat dripping down his back and temples, Will pushes himself to keep running even when his lungs feel like they're coated in iron.

In the distance, he can see the river. He's close to his campsite, but he has no idea how far. In the back of his mind, he has the idea to plunge into the river to erase the blood smell from his skin. Even if he were there for only a few seconds to cross it, it could work, he would just need to keep his gun above the water. He jerks to the left again, ready to leap into the water.

Everything happens very quickly after that.

There is a searing, white-hot pain in his left side as the creature grabs hold of him, but with teeth or claws, Will can't tell because he's too busy screaming. The wound is agony, and the shotgun falls from his hand and disappears somewhere below him. Will's feet have been lifted from the ground, and it isn't until he hits the ground again that he realizes the Rougarou has thrown him.

He lies there for a second as pain circulates through his entire body. His eyes are blurred by tears and whatever air was left in his lungs from the running was knocked out of him upon hitting the ground. He turns his head to the sound of snarling.

The Rougarou rises itself to its full height, throws its head back with a howl that reverberates off of the trees, and strikes terror into Will's pounding heart. Horrifically, Will can feel every emotion that the creature feels towards him, and his mind is burning with the repetitive thoughts of *HuntEatKill.*

The Rougarou takes a large, but slow step toward him. It's playing with him.

Something thick and warm is thrumming through Will's veins. It feels like he's been hit with morphine, and panic wells up inside him again. *Don't go to sleep, don't go to sleep, don't…*

The Rougarou snarls, baring its large teeth.

"Help! Someone help me!" Will screams as loud as his voice will allow him under the fog of whatever is pushing its way into his skull.

The Rougarou takes another step, crouching for the kill.

Will turns to his other side and his spirits lift when he sees that the shotgun is only a few feet from him. He just needs to hurry.

He frantically army crawls forward just as the beast begins to charge. His fingers curl around the barrel as the sound of his blood rushing through his veins becomes deafeningly loud and his vision begins to darken around the edges.

He isn't going to make it. He's going to die.

Will flips himself over. The beast lunges. The gun goes off. White lights explode behind Will's eyelids, then everything fades to black.

July 21st, 2003 — 9:30 AM

Will feels hazy as he slowly comes back to consciousness. His body feels heavy and weighted down, and as his senses come back online, he notices that he's soaking wet and cold. His eyes fly open as he sits up with a gasp and begins patting down his body, counting limbs, fingers, and toes as he goes.

He's so frantic that it even takes him a moment to realize that he's completely naked, and even longer to realize that he's in the middle of his campsite, just outside his tent. His entire body is a canvas of bruises and cuts that have since stopped bleeding.

Everything comes back to him in that instant; the beast in the woods, the never-ending chase, the pain as it picked him up in its…

Frantically, Will looks down at his left side where the beast wounded him, expecting to see blood, but instead, he finds several tiny but vicious marks all in an oval-shaped pattern. *Oh, God.* He thinks, swallowing hard. It bit him. The creature bit him.

But the bite seems to have already healed over, which should be impossible.

How is this possible? Where is it? Why didn't it kill me?

Will searches the ground around him, but finds no evidence of the beast from the previous night. Not even a hint of fur.

Thunder rolls above his head with the threat of a storm, and Will decides he doesn't care enough to find out.

Swiftly and with trembling hands, Will dresses, packs up his things, and climbs into his truck. He can spend the rest of his vacation in his apartment where no nightmarish cryptids can get him.

Over the next few weeks, Will tries to rationalize with himself. If it weren't for the healed wound on his side, he would have dismissed the whole event and checked himself into the nearest loony bin, but the bite mark mocks him every time he stands in front of his bathroom mirror, not allowing him to let go of that night.

The biggest mystery of all is what happened after it jumped him. Will spends night after night lying in his bed remembering all that he can, but when he gets to the moment that the creature lunges and Will's body went limp with what he assumes now was pain or exhaustion, to the time the next morning when he came to, naked and covered in filth, there's nothing. It's like when you have a tooth pulled and you keep running your tongue over the gap in your mouth because something is *missing*.

But, try as he might, no memories come to him. Everything is just… blank.

He tries telling himself that he imagined the creature, that what attacked him was nothing more than a regular, run-of-the-mill wolf, and he had been so frightened that his overactive imagination turned a perfectly normal animal into a nightmare. Children do that all of the time; it isn't impossible to think that his brain could do the same.

He still doesn't know where his clothes went, what happened, or where the creature disappeared to after it got him. Maybe he doesn't want to know. Maybe it's better that way.

So, Will Graham returns to work once his vacation is up, and he tries to put the whole incident out of his mind.

August 12, 2003 — 7:15 PM

Will knew he was sick when he woke up this morning. His body ached with fever and fatigue, there were bags under his eyes, and his skin still feels too tight around his body, like a new shirt thrown in the dryer by mistake. But, he's used to feeling under the weather, so he got up as usual, got ready, and went to work.

Now, sitting at his desk, he regrets it.

Tiredly, he rubs his hands over his face, trying to force himself to wake up. He's been reading and re-reading the same line in a report for the last ten minutes and he still has no fucking clue what it says.

"Graham?"

Will looks up to see his Sergeant, an older black woman named Cecile, standing in front of his desk, watching him with a look of concern. "Ma'am?" He replies.

Cecile looks him up and down. "You look like shit. You feeling okay?" She reaches out and puts a motherly hand on his forehead, which he jerks away from. Her hands are *freezing*. She looks stunned, but she doesn't comment on it. "You definitely have a fever. Why'd you come in?"

"I… I don't know." He says, rubbing at his eyes again. "I hope it's not contagious."

"Let's hope not." She answers, not unkindly. "Go home, honey. If you're feeling better tomorrow, you can come back in, but I can't have you here looking like this."

Will wants to argue that he's fine, but even as he's thinking about it, he knows he isn't. Something is definitely not right. He nods and gets up to grab his coat. "I'm sorry."

Cecile gives him a pointed look. "No use apologizin'. Now go home and rest."

"Yes, ma'am. Thank you."

The longer the night goes on, the hotter the fever burns. Will lies in bed, stripped down to nothing but his boxers, right in front of his shitty floor fan, but no matter what he tries, he can't get cool.

There's something else too; something new he's never felt before.

There's an ache in his teeth. A hollow, never-ending ache that feels nothing like tooth pain should. It travels to his throat and down to his stomach that feels empty and unsatisfied. Everything hurts. Everything burns.

Will sits up with a pathetic whimper and tries to wipe the sweat from his face. He needs to eat something. He swings his legs over the bed and shakily gets to his feet.

His cabinets aren't bare. He has a good supply of snacks and meals that are ready to cook, but none of them sound good. It won't help his hunger. He needs something more. Something… *fresh.*

Against his better judgment, Will dresses with shaking hands, then grabs his keys and heads out of his apartment.

Will approaches a food truck first. He has his hoodie pulled up over his head to hide his feverish face, but the rain coming down in drizzles has everyone sheltered in some way. It's perfect. He doesn't stand out.

Or, at least, he's trying not to.

There's a pair of tourists in front of him, two middle-aged drunken Midwesterners not dressed for the weather at all. The wife is prattling on to the poor man behind the counter about everything from their hotel to their son at UCLA to "wish we had known it would rain so much, but oh *Gosh* the food is delicious, you should hear my husband he does this amazing accent, he sounds just like you!"

And then of course the husband has to try and Will is practically bouncing on his heels as the fever makes his resolve start to crumble and he imagines slamming both of their flushed faces into the side of the truck. People would probably applaud.

He tastes blood in his throat and realizes his tooth has caught his lip somehow.

Eventually, thank fuck, the tourists move out of his way, and Will almost drops to his knees in thanks. He's so fucking hungry.

"Give me whatever is the most food." He says.

The man behind the counter just nods at him, probably recognizing him from one of his previous trips so he doesn't question Will's choice, and he even manages to get Will's order out before the fucking tourists, who give him a vaguely dirty look as he brushes past them.

Will makes a beeline for his apartment, but about a minute into the walk, his stomach can't take it and he ducks into a nearby alley, takes out the plastic fork from the take-out bag, and begins shoveling food into his mouth like he's never eaten in his life.

It's delicious, of course, it is, spicy and tender and juicy, and Will finishes the entire box in under two minutes. He's still hungry.

God, what's wrong with me?

His body is warmed from fever and meat, but he's hungry and unsatisfied. He needs more.

Something warm. Something fresh. Something… *alive.*

Will lets out a gasp as the weight of his thoughts send him reeling back against the filthy brick wall. His heart is beating rapidly and his breath is coming in short, frantic pants. He shakes his head, trying to clear the thoughts of blood and flesh and bone from his mind, but it doesn't help. His stomach is growling in protest, echoing the call to devour.

He scrambles to get to his feet, but suddenly catches a glimpse of his reflection in the puddle beside him and his blood turns to ice.

It's Will's face in the reflection, but it's certainly not his eyes that he's looking into. His irises are almost glowing, brightening the blue to an alarming degree.

What's happening to me?

It has to be the fever. He's hallucinating, he's sick and out of his mind. That's all this is. It has to be.

Footsteps echo behind him and Will clumsily gets to his feet. He doesn't want anyone to see him like this.

"Hey, gorgeous, come back and join the party!" A drunken, happy, British female voice calls out to him.

Go away. Go away, go away, go away. He leans back against the brick wall with his back to her so that she can't see his face.

She doesn't go away. She continues to approach him. "You alright, love? Did you drink too much?"

Will groans. “Yeah. I’m fine.”

The woman doesn’t leave. He hears the shift of clothing as her scent gets closer; alcohol and perfume and cigarette smoke, and then as her hand moves to touch his shoulder, he’s overwhelmed with the ache in his teeth and the scent of her skin and *fleshbloodbonesmeat*...

Will jerks away from her touch with a gag.

The woman gasps. “Oh! Poor thing, here, you stay right here, don’t move, I’ll get you some water.” Then she turns and jogs in the opposite direction, taking the scent of her along.

Will gasps for breath, hoping the dingy smell of the alleyway will clear his lungs, but it ultimately does not. He looks down at the puddle and still sees the fiery blue of his eyes reflecting back at him. His stomach snarls with hunger and a sudden animalistic growl startles him. It takes him a moment to realize the noise came from his own mouth.

Something is very, very wrong.

He has to get out of here.

Summoning all of his strength, Will pushes off of the wall, adjusts the hood around his head to further cover his face, then quickly slips unnoticed out of the alleyway. He doesn’t have a destination in mind. He lets his legs take him far away.

Will Graham walks and walks until the lights and noises from the city have faded out of sight and earshot, and he trudges deep into the woods. His skin is slick with sweat that’s dampening his hair and tangling it in his eyes. His clothes are soaked in it too, either that or rainwater. His skin is burning hot and the more he walks, the more tired he feels.

His skin no longer feels like his. It’s like there’s something else trying to claw its way through to the surface. It hurts. His teeth continue to ache with hunger.

Oddly, despite how disoriented he is, his senses are very sharp. Everything is brighter and clearer, and he can hear *everything.* Little animals skittering around on the damp forest floor, the brush of rain and wind against the leaves… and the sound of distant crying.

He is a police officer still, despite how sick he must feel.

As he gets closer to the source of the noise, the smell of fear and sex cloud the air. A low growl is building in Will’s throat. He knows what he’s stumbled upon.

He takes cover behind a large set of bushes when he sees them.

A middle-aged man has a young woman pinned to the ground, one hand on her belly, one hand clamped over her mouth and he’s ripping at her clothes in an obscene attempt at removing them. The girl is whimpering and crying, pleading for help. Will feels her fear, feels his satisfaction at having a victim underneath him again…

Everything around him turns to silence except for the sound of his blood pulsing behind his ears. A loud, nightmarish growl rips up from behind his teeth, making the man pause out of

fear as he whips toward the sound. The only thing running through Will's mind is *HuntEatKill*.

Something is coming.

With screaming noise and clarity, Will Graham finally knows what.

He doesn't feel afraid.

He charges, his sights fixed on the man just as his clothes and skin are ripped apart. He lands on the ground on four legs, and with a scream of pure terror, the man abandons his almost-victim on the ground and takes off into the trees.

Will follows.

The pig doesn't get very far.

His blood tastes like victory.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> Hello!
> Sorry for the length on this one, I feel bad for being gone for so long! There are definitely going to be some time skips in future chapters, but HANNIBAL IS HERE! I can't really think of anything else to say, so just know I love you guys and I can't wait to hear what you think!
> All my love,
> Canary

November 2013

Senses are dull in human form. All of the colors seem dull and dim, all sound seems quiet, and even his sense of smell is lacking (which Will didn't expect to be an irritant, but was unpleasantly surprised to find that it bothers him a lot.) As a man, Will Graham's only protection from the outside world is his mind, and right now, that's failing him too.

He steals a glance while the consultant has his back turned, his eyes trailing over strong shoulders hidden beneath an ugly cream suit. He sneers without really meaning to and turns his gaze forward.

"Tell me then, how many confessions?" The doctor, *Doctor Hannibal Lecter* apparently, says with a velvety, accented droll. His voice sends a shiver up Will's spine, and he isn't sure he likes it at all.

"Twelve dozen, last I checked," Jack replies. "None of them had any details. Until this morning, then they all had details. Some genius in Duluth PD took a photograph of Elise Nichols' body with his cell phone, shared it with his friends, and then Freddie Lounds posted it on Tattlecrime.com."

Will can't help it. The venom he holds for that stupid woman bubbles up before he can stop it as he growls out: *"Tasteless."*

"Do you have trouble with taste?" Dr. Lecter's voice is suddenly behind him and Will feels something ugly crawl up his spine. Something about the wording of the question bothers him; like it's teasing but curious but challenging but…

Oh, who fucking cares.

"My thoughts are often not tasty." He bites back.

“Nor mine. No effective barriers.”

Will can’t really argue with that. “I build forts.” He hides his grimace behind the mug of shitty FBI coffee.

“Associations come quickly.” He counters as he moves to sit down.

“So do forts.” Will tries to say it with a bit of finality in hopes that this pretentious psychiatrist Jack hired will just leave him alone, but he realizes too late that he should know better.

He feels Hannibal’s eyes on him, boring holes into the side of his face and it feels like a brand. “Not fond of eye contact, are you?”

The question itself is surprising. Bold. *Reckless,* his mind supplies. “Eyes are distracting,” He breathes, trying to release a little of the anger he feels. “You see too much, you don’t see enough, and,” He turns and angles his body so that he can give this asshole exactly what he wanted, and hopefully make him realize that it isn’t smart to poke a hungry wolf. “It’s hard to focus when you’re thinking *‘oh,* those whites are *really* white’, or, *‘he must have hepatitis’,* or *“Is that a burst vein?’”*

However, to his surprise, when he looks into maroon eyes—and *Jesus* what a color to have, Will can’t see anything. It’s like staring into a cavern without a flashlight; you never know what’s lurking in the dark. All Will can see is the reflection of his own eyes and everything inside of them, and that in of itself is a little terrifying. He focuses somewhere over the doctor’s shoulder instead.

More surprisingly, Dr. Lecter is decidedly *not* offended by his rude remarks and is actually… smiling at him?

Will likes that even less. “So, yeah. I try to avoid eyes whenever possible. Jack?” He wants to kick himself for devolving to asking Jack Crawford to save him from talking to Hannibal Lecter, but needs must and whatever.

“I imagine what you see and learn touches everything else in your mind,” Hannibal murmurs close to him, sending alarm bells off in Will’s head. “Your values and decency are present, yet, shocked at your associations, appalled at your dreams. No forts in the bone arena of your skull for things you love.”

Will knows he has a temper. It’s always been that way, even before he was changed, but for a brief moment, he is so very happy that rage alone cannot make him shift like the stupid *Twilight* werewolves, because the *fire* that floods his veins is enough to make him want to bare his teeth in a warning growl. He hasn’t looked away from Dr. Lecter yet, his body won’t let him. The man is definitely intelligent, worryingly so. It’s like he can *see* that there’s something inside Will, skulking below the surface. He’s right, of course, but that’s why it’s so *wrong*.

“Whose profile are you working on?” Will snaps. There’s a very brief moment where all Dr. Lecter does is stare back without answering, and he can’t fucking take it. He rounds on Jack.

“Whose profile is he working on?”

Jack looks like he’s losing the will to live.

“I’m sorry, Will,” Dr. Lecter straightens himself out in the chair like the last ten seconds didn’t happen. “Observing is what we do. I can’t shut mine off any more than you can shut yours off.”

“Please don’t psychoanalyze me. You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed.”

“Will,” Jack tries to placate, which only angers him further. How is *Will* being the bitchy one here?

He isn’t going to take this. “Now, if you’ll excuse me,” He says, pushing to his feet to try to get as far away from this fucking room as possible. “I have to go give a lecture on psychoanalyzing.”

Will grabs his jacket and hurls his way out of the room, wishing that the buffer wasn’t there just so that the door would slam and emphasize the point.

He makes his way to the men’s restroom first, and luckily it’s empty. He turns on the sink, cups his shaking hands under the water, and splashes it on his face. He wipes it clean, then braces his hands on the sides of the sink and forces his head up.

The blue around his irises is still normal, not the glowing blue that he would usually see if he was close to shifting, but he definitely doesn’t fucking feel better. He lets out a few deep breaths to steady his nerves. “You’re fine.” He tells his reflection.

“I fucking hate psychiatrists.” He and his reflection say in unison.

August 2003

The call from Cecile had been unexpected. She sounded tense on the phone, way more than usual, but not in the typical ‘I’m head of the homicide department in New Orleans and it’s tourist season’ way. No, no, it was much more than that.

Cecile sounded… unnerved. Sergeant Cecile Warren *never* sounds like that.

Now Will knows why.

“She says that a man tried to sexually assault her in the woods last weekend,” Cecile tells him when they get outside the room.

Will doesn’t know what to say. He knows that already. He knows because he was there. He’s on the other side of the door, staring through the glass into the face of a girl he remembers

very well. The memory snuck up behind him and hit him in the skull with a cinderblock, or at least that's what it feels like.

"And?" He presses.

If he sounds anxious, Cecile doesn't comment on it. "She says something… *something* saved her life."

His heart flutters anxiously in his ribcage. "Some *thing* as opposed to some *one."*

"She won't say what happened. Poor thing is terrified."

"And why do you want me to talk to her?"

Cecile presses her lips into a thin line. She doesn't suspect him, she's probably not even on the same planet as suspecting him, but it does nothing to quell his anxieties. "Because you connect with people, Graham. Your heart is big and you know how to make people feel comfortable. She's more likely to open up to you. I think she may have seen something really terrible in the woods, maybe a homicide we don't know about yet, or something else just as bad. I need to make sure we're covering all bases."

Will suppresses his sigh. He likes Cecile, absolutely, but she doesn't understand him. Will Graham doesn't connect because his heart is kind and vast. He isn't even sure he has a heart anymore.

The monster inside him certainly doesn't.

Without much else to do, Will opens the door and walks inside.

The girl (Alexis Shepard, twenty-four years old, he knows now), looks better than the last time Will saw her. She's certainly traumatized by what happened, and Will can't blame her for that. Not after remembering what *he* did that night. She glances up timidly when he enters, and Will waits with bated breath.

Her eyes are hazel in color and under the lights, they look earthy green and amber all at once. By some fucking miracle, there isn't a shred of recognition within them either. She only ever saw his monster.

Will breathes easily. She doesn't know him. "Alexis," He says as he goes to sit down across from her. "I'm Detective Will Graham. Sergeant Warren told me a few of the details, but I'd like to hear the story from your mouth."

Alexis swallows hard and pushed her hair away from her face with a trembling hand. "I was… I was at a party, and I got a little fucked up. I got separated from my friends in the woods, and this man, he…" Tears spring to her eyes and she rubs anxiously at her arms like he's trying to scrub the feeling of the pig off of her skin. Will can relate to that. "He tried to rape me. But then he couldn't because something *else* was there. It… attacked him and…"

Will's heart is pounding against his ribs. *Something else, something else, something else.* "What did you see?" He manages to grit out.

She turns to him with tears in her eyes and he has to look away from them because the weight of her fear, her desperation for someone to believe her when she knows it's impossible is suffocating.

True to what he thinks, Alexis makes a sad sound in the back of her throat and his heart lurches. "You won't believe me. Nobody does."

He could almost laugh if the situation weren't so terrible. "Try me."

Alexis doesn't believe him. She glares at him, but she has nothing to lose. "A wolf. A fucking wolf."

Will's breath catches and his heart beats faster. His palms are starting to sweat. "And what did it look like?"

"Don't *patronize* me!" Alexis shouts. "I know it sounds crazy, but I'm *not* crazy, I—"

"I don't think you're crazy. You say you saw something, I believe you." Will pours all of the sincerity he can into it. If he passionately denied that she saw anything, it would probably be more suspicious. "Tell me what you saw."

Suspicion and mistrust still cloud her eyes, but Will sees how desperate she is to tell *someone* what happened. Unfortunately, the only person who will believe her happens to be the creature that fucking scarred her in the first place. She lets out a sigh. "It was… huge. Huge and black I think, or maybe it was brown, I don't know. But it came out of the woods and chased that man away from me. I didn't know what else to do so I just ran as fast as I could and hoped I'd get away."

Will can see it still if he closes his eyes. The images of the pig running for his miserable life with a Rougarou hot on his heels, the way the man screamed beneath him when Will's teeth bit into the back of his neck and tore the flesh from his bones like cutting through butter. He tries to keep his eyes open so that he *doesn't* see it.

"It wasn't a regular wolf though." Alexis continues, her voice still shaking with fear. "It was *huge.* Way too big to be a wolf."

Will tries not to flinch. "What do you think it was?"

"I don't *know!"* She exclaims. "All I know is that when I saw it, I had this horrible, awful feeling in my stomach that it wasn't… *right."*

His stomach tightens. She couldn't be more right, but he can't tell her that.

So Will does what he's supposed to do, he tells her it's very possible she saw a real wolf, but how scared she was and how dark it was, plus the fact that she was inebriated when it happened, tricked her mind into believing it was much bigger than it really was. Alexis is drawn in by his words and compassion, and when she walks out of the room, she actually apologizes to him for being so silly.

“Fear makes the mind do strange things.” He tells her as he walks her to the door. “My mind has done it to me.”

Alexis smiles warmly back at him. “Yeah, I guess we’re only human.”

It’s such a simple, common phrase, but it hits Will just right and he feels a small piece of himself break off and fall to the floor in the middle of the precinct. He isn’t human, not anymore. He’s a monster. He’s a killer now too, even if he can’t help it.

But he can’t say that either, so Will just forces a smile and replies: “Exactly.”

It tastes bitter.

November 2013

“I’m very careful about what I put into my body, which means I end up preparing most meals myself. A little protein scramble to start the day,” Dr. Lecter says as he pushes the bowl over toward Will, who eyes it suspiciously. “Some eggs, some sausage.”

Will hesitates for a moment. The food *looks* good enough, but it’s only his second time in a room with Lecter and he can’t help the way he reflectively wants to get as far from this man as humanly possible (no pun intended). Dr. Lecter doesn’t seem like much, though, if Will’s being honest. Not being able to get a read on him is… concerning, to some degree, but Will Graham doesn’t see many things as *threatening* these days.

It’s been over a decade now; the anniversary of his curse passed quietly in July. Will counts by the moon cycle instead of the exact date, but when the full moon rose high in the Wolf Trap sky that night, it was a comfort. After ten years, Will is finally starting to accept what he is, instead of just accepting he can’t change it and choosing to be miserable about it.

He kills only when he must, like when the ache in his teeth won’t stop or when the full moon drives him to do so. He only kills those that he feel have earned that fate; rapists, child abusers, monsters that are monsters purely because they choose to be. He no longer feels guilty about the lives he takes, only because if he’s chosen to see them as meals and not humans. It’s horrific but it’s sated survival or guilty starvation, which always ends up the same way.

Will picks up his fork, stabs a piece of meat, and lifts it to his mouth.

The rich, juicy flavor sends sparks down his tongue, and a shocking but *so, so pleasant* shiver travels down Will’s spine. Warmth fills him to the brim as the taste satiates the ever-present hunger and the ache in his teeth, and Will is so overwhelmed for a second that he doesn’t even realize that there’s a growl building low in his throat. He swallows it down with the rest of the meat. The monster within him is so pleased, and it only takes Will a fraction of a second to realize why.

He glances up at Hannibal Lecter from across the table, making eye contact for only a second to see what's lurking behind them. All he sees is himself.

Without missing a beat, as only a fraction of a second has gone by, Will hums his approval. "It's delicious." He says. "Thank you."

Dr. Lecter smiles back, gratified and perhaps *pleased* with Will's answer. "My pleasure." It's casual but genuine, and once again Will finds himself questioning his own judgment.

I end up preparing most meals myself, he had said. Which means he's cooked for probably several decades and he's certainly skilled, so… maybe Will got it wrong? Maybe his cooking is *just so good* that it made Will's mind all… confused?

Yeah. That has to be it.

He doesn't realize that he's been lost in space until Dr. Lecter's voice startles him out of it, going on about his 'analytical ambush' and apologies and whatnot.

"Just keep it professional." He replies, because, *honestly.*

Dr. Lecter gives him an inscrutable little smile, one that sets Will on edge for reasons he doesn't quite understand. "Or, we could socialize like adults. God forbid we become friendly."

Will is grateful for the coffee mug in front of his face because he feels the urge to laugh. "I don't find you that interesting." It isn't a lie. The good Dr. Lecter makes good food and is too polite to comment on Will's social inadequacies and rude behavior, but that doesn't make him interesting. He's a psychiatrist, and Will doesn't trust them for a reason. *Friendly?* What a joke.

But Dr. Lecter doesn't seem too upset about that either. In fact, when Will looks up, there's a fire burning in his gaze like he's both amused and pleased, and it's unsettling because no one has *ever* looked at Will like that before. People look at him with weariness and a guarded politeness that is generally only reserved for wounded dogs on the side of the streets or homeless men picking half-eaten meals out of the garbage. Or, worse, they look at him like they're afraid he's going to take out a shiv at any moment.

They certainly never look at him like *that* though.

And then, as if to throw him off even more, Dr. Lecter just simply replies: "You will."

It's arrogant, but from what Will can see, arrogance isn't what he's trying to convey. Is it? No, certainly not, there's something *much* darker hidden in those two little words.

Will tries to appear nonchalant and uninterested by ignoring the comment like he never even heard it. He bites down on his second cut of sausage, and once again his body seems to light up like a fucking Christmas tree. The monster inside of him howls praise for the flavor and the feeling, and Will Graham knows without a shred of doubt that what he's currently eating is absolutely *human.*

Will looks up, but Dr. Lecter is looking at his plate, and he takes the opportunity to study his face. There's no indication that he knows Will has figured it out, so there's no immediate danger there. What is this man's game? Is he really bringing (chef-quality) meals made from human meat to law enforcement officers, hoping they won't notice? Okay, maybe no one else may be able to tell the difference between human meant and animal meat by taste alone, but how has no one caught on?

A voice in his head that sounds like Alana for some reason tells him it's possible that perhaps the meat came from a butcher and it's not Hannibal Lecter *himself* doing the butchering, *but…*

The doctor in question looks up and catches Will's wandering eye for a brief moment, and he's yet again met with a gaze he can't begin to comprehend. There's still something burning underneath, but whatever it is, it's so, *so* carefully hidden and out of reach, tucked beneath layers and layers of masks, personas, and walls protected by teeth and steel.

But while there is something hidden, there's no other explanation other than Will is not the only killer in this room. Or the only one who eats his victims.

What is he supposed to do about this though? Does he go to Jack? No, *God,* no, he can't do that, what would he even say? *"Hey, Jack, don't freak out, but I'm pretty sure that Dr. Lecter is a cannibal. Why? Because he gave me sausage that was made from human meat. How do I know? Well, I too am a cannibal, technically, but also not really. It's really complicated. Please don't ask why. Okay, I'm a Rougarou. It's kinda like a werewolf. Oh, you're arresting me? No? Oh, you're* committing *me. Yeah, that's fair."*

Yeah, no. Telling Jack is certainly not an option.

So what, then? Dr. Lecter is obviously killing people, but what if his reasoning is the same as Will's? Does he hunt for food? Is he a creature like Will and he's just found a new way of enjoying his meals? Does the cooking help him feel better about what he has to do? Briefly, Will entertains the idea of bringing home one of his kills, frying it up Cajun style with a side of red beans and rice as he does with fish sometimes. It doesn't sound terrible. Is that Dr. Lecter's game?

No, that's too kind. Much too kind.

There's something else.

He's starting to feel a bit hysterical at this point, but his body is still going through the motions of a companionable breakfast. He needs to chill if he's going to get through this day.

Oh, shit, he's going to be with Dr. Lecter *all day,* Will remembers suddenly. He has to keep an eye on him. He needs more information.

"Agent Crawford tells me you have a knack for the monsters." He suddenly says.

Will eyes him carefully. He's a bit thrown by the change in topic, but then he remembers that he had a whole mental spiral between the last thing said and the new topic and he shakes

himself out of it. He shoves his plate to the side, human remains ignored for the time being, and drops his voice to a low, tense tone. “I don’t think the Shrike killed that girl in the field.”

Dr. Lecter seems to consider this and leans forward to give Will his attention. “The Devil is in the details.” He says. “What didn’t your Copycat do to the girl in the field? What gave it away?”

“Everything.” Will breathes, running his hands over his face. “It was like he had to show me a negative so that I could see the positive. That crime scene was practically *gift-wrapped.”*

“The mathematics of human behavior. All those ugly variables.”

Will almost sneers at the accuracy of that statement and hides it by going back for more coffee.

“Some bad math with this Shrike fellow, huh?” Will’s eyes meet his briefly across the table before looking away again. “Are you constructing his fantasies? What sort of problems does he have?”

Will almost laughs. “Uh, he has a few.”

Dr. Lecter pauses for a moment as if he’s hanging onto every word Will says, then adds: “Ever have any problems, Will?”

This time Will can’t help the sarcastic dismissal as he arranges his face into mock innocence and points to himself like he’s scandalized. “No.”

After all, he can’t just say *‘Hi, my name is Will and I’m positively* drowning *in problems, thank you for asking* without sounding like an angsty teenager.

But Dr. Lecter instead smiles like he can see right through Will’s bullshit and still doesn’t believe him. “Of course not. You and I are just alike. Problem free. Nothing about us to feel horrible about.”

Of course, he says this just as Will has turned back to his breakfast and is about to place another piece of human into his mouth, and Will is struck down by another unfamiliar sensation as he glances back up at the killer sitting opposite him.

Suddenly, dear Dr. Lecter seems *very* interesting indeed.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Hello all! Sorry it's been a minute, life is busy. Thank you guys for all of the feedback so far, you're all amazing and I appreciate the hell out of you. I hope this is at least a little worth the wait. I promise you that not every chapter will be time skips, especially as we go further and further into the plot.
> Additionally, this fic has mentions of Hoodoo and Voodoo, which I do not practice because they are closed, though I do know a bit about them. However, I'm no expert and if anything I say is incorrect, please correct me!
> Anyway, I hope you guys enjoy this and I love you all!
> Canary

September 2003

Will Graham's life is officially one big catastrophic fucking joke. Except there's no punchline, no one gets the joke, then the joke gets you fired and steals your girlfriend and fucking kills you then…

If he wasn't right on a public street, Will could absolutely use a good scream. Or a strong drink. Either or.

Get ahold of yourself. Will sighs and rubs at his tired eyes. He didn't sleep last night, too anxious about this morning's trip that he decided could no longer be put off now that his second full moon has passed and he's nowhere closer to answers than he was the day he got the bite.

The scar on his side twinges, and for a brief moment, Will can feel the ghostly imprints of the Rougarou's teeth still digging into the prick-like marks that it left behind. Ridiculously, his own wolf ripples under his skin like a wave on a beach right before a storm as his anxiety climbs. He shakes his head to clear the thoughts of *bloodbonemeat* out of his consciousness. This is why he's here.

Will looks up into the gloomy New Orleans sky, slides his glasses onto his nose, then focuses his eyes on the building in front of him and wills his legs to carry him forward.

He counts himself lucky to have had a rather unorthodox babysitter as a child, one who frequented this place often and was kind enough to pass along the name when he called last week. *"It looks weird from the outside. Just trust me. Go upstairs."* She had told him, and she had been completely correct. This place did look… well, it looked like a whole lot of

nothing. To someone unfamiliar with this area of New Orleans, this tiny street corner store would appear to be exactly that; a cramped, dingy little store with full shelves and sleepy patrons. However, if you're someone who knows what they're looking for, you know that buildings have secrets just like people do.

The door swings open and the groggy cashier looks up without saying anything. Will is grateful. He keeps his eyes fixed forward and glides past the few shoppers in his way toward the small doorway leading up to the second floor that's covered by a curtain of beads. The smell of smoke and roses hovers in the air like a cloud. The stairs are narrow and steep and nearly all of them creak on the way up, but it isn't until he reaches the top of the steps that his heart leaps into his throat. Down on the floor in the entryway is a thick line of red brick dust, and Will feels both relieved and terrified that he's in the right place.

"You'll see a lotta the old folk around here putin' brick dust by their doors. Y'know why, son?"

"Brick dust means that… nobody who wants to hurt you can cross it, right, Daddy?"

"Exactly, Will."

Will closes his eyes, then takes a step over the line.

His foot hits the floor with a little more force than he intended, considering he was afraid he wouldn't be able to cross it in the first place, but he ends up stumbling in like a werewolf in a chine shop and almost falling over his own feet before he catches himself against the wall. The clatter he makes is almost enough to make him turn around and leave, but he's too mortified to do anything.

"You alright, honey?" A jazzy-sounding male voice calls over to him.

Well. Can't run now. Will squeezes his eyes shut and makes himself stand up straight. "I'm fine." He answers, turning toward him and smiling (though it probably looks more like a grimace).

The man in question stares back with one eyebrow raised, completely unconvinced. He's in his mid-thirties, with dark skin, large dark eyes, and strong but almost feminine features. He's dressed in greys and blacks, and even his fingernails are painted to match, and each wrist is wrapped with several bracelets, some with what looks to be bone fragments through the thread. *Yeah, definitely in the right place.*

Hoodoo and Voodoo are still common practices in places like Louisiana, and even those who say they don't believe still tend to follow the rules. There are corporate-run metaphysical shops that *claim* to have spiritualists who know what they're doing, but if you really want to delve into these things, you go looking for places like this; places hidden in the cracks where the real magic grows like ivy through the slits in the concrete. *Apparently,* he reminds himself.

Will doesn't believe in magic. He doesn't believe in deities or rituals or potions and spells, but what he does know is that he has three weeks until the next full moon, three weeks until

another transformation, another death, and he's just about run out of fucking ideas. So, now he's here. At the Hoodoo shop. Hoping to find a cure for his curse.

The shop looks pretty much exactly like he pictured it; rows of shelves with little trays and buckets full of all manner of things that a witch or conjurer could need (and *hopefully,* whatever a Rougarou could need). There's a burner on the counter with a smoldering stick of incense inside, tapestries on the ceilings, the walls, symbols painted in the blank spaces that Will recognizes as ones for protection and harmony, amongst others that he doesn't. There's an entire section of shelves just for books too, but not all new ones with glossy paperbacks and still-sharp pages—there are books that are old and withered with age, yellowing pages, and dirty spines. That's a good sign too.

The man, who by this point has been watching Will stand like an arcade game avatar just slowly rotating to see the shop while not actually looking at anything, clears his throat politely. "Did you need some help?"

"Tons," Will replies immediately, then cringes at himself for being so bad at this. "Uh, sorry, yeah. I'm um… I'm here to see Lisette? My uh… an old friend, Caroline sent me."

The guy's face goes from politely concerned to cheerful and he breaks into a smile. "Oh, Caroline, sure. Well, I'm sorry, but my Mama's not in today. She had a hip replacement on Thursday."

Of course. Will thinks as his heart sinks. "Right. Thanks anyway." He turns on his heel, ready to book it down the narrow stairs when:

"I work with her a lot." The guy calls out after him. "She wouldn't let me run this place without her if I couldn't. What do you need?"

He could say no. *Should* say no. This was a mistake coming here anyway, he should leave before—

"What got you down by the swamp?"

A shiver goes down his spine, spreading goosebumps all over his skin while the monster inside of him wakes up and speaks for him. "How did you know about that?" He grumbles as he turns around, fixing the potential threat with a very severe look.

The man smiles at him, and it isn't unkind or sinister in any way, but it still sets Will's teeth on edge. "My name's René."

"Will."

René gestures for him to come closer, and after a moment of hesitation, Will does. He steps right up to the counter, well aware that René is leaning forward and studying his face, but he doesn't let him make eye contact. "So, Will, what got you?"

"You wouldn't believe me."

“That gives me more reason to believe you. I could tell that there was somethin’ latched on to your back the moment you stepped foot in here.” René tells him gently.

Will’s stomach is churning and he has to wipe his sweaty palms on his jeans. His jaw is locked so tightly that he can feel the grinding of the bones in his jaw, but he’s not sure if it’s the anxiety or if it’s the… the *ache.* God, he really hopes it’s the former. He swallows hard. “Can I just… can I show you?” He asks gloomily.

René nods.

Will’s fingers linger on the hem of his shirt for a second, not quite ready to do what he’s about to do, but knowing he has to do it anyway. *All of your choices have been taken away,* the dark part of his brain sneers. Regardless, he turns to the side and lifts up his shirt to reveal the cursed bite mark on his side.

René goes dead still and so does Will’s heart.

“Oh…” Comes the soft, shocked sound, and the vice around Will’s heart tightens. “That’s…”

“Yeah.” Will growls as he yanks his clothing back in place.

“A Loup-garou?”

“As much as I want to deny it… yes.”

René makes a sympathetic noise, then runs his hand over his face. “I’m so sorry, honey. I can’t help you with that.” He sounds genuinely distressed about it, and it melts some of Will’s rage into stone-cold dejection.

Not that he really expected different.

René straightens up, suddenly looking contemplative. “I might know somebody who can help you, but you have to do exactly what I say.”

September 2003

For the second time today, Will wonders what the fuck he’s doing. After taking René’s advice, he found himself back in the car and driving towards an address he wasn’t sure he really wanted to visit, but once he got past the hulking, six-foot-whatever older brother who answered the door, he knew it was too late to back out.

He’s led around back from the front door, the *I don’t want you in my house* very clear in the brother’s posture from the get-go. Not that Will really minds. He follows him close until they reach the backyard where they find a tall woman lounging in a lawn chair. The clouds have gone, now the sun is high and bright, and she seems to be soaking up all of what she can.

“Jules?” The brother calls.

The woman, Julianna (or Jules, apparently) turns her head toward them. Her eyes are covered by a pair of sunglasses, but he sees her knit eyebrows and he feels bad for bothering her. If René was right… Fuck, he hates this.

Her brother turns to Will and inclines his head in Julianna’s direction. “Go ahead, man.” He tells him in an ominous tone.

Will is tempted to tell him to fuck off, but he holds his tongue. He walks over toward Jules, who hasn’t looked away from him but has now removed her sunglasses and is folding them in her lap. He stops a few feet from her and stares at the ground, unsure how to proceed. “I’m… sorry to interrupt your afternoon.”

“‘S’all right.” She answers, her accent heavier than his. “Lisette sent you?”

“Her son.”

“Close enough. You wanna sit?” She asks, gesturing to the empty lawn chair beside her.

Will nods in thanks and takes a seat, but doesn’t say anything. He still doesn’t know what he’s doing.

Jules sighs and looks back over her shoulder where her brother is busying himself with the garden and pretending not to hover. “Sorry about Grant. He’s a little… overprotective.”

Will shrugs. “Is he a… um…”

“No, just me.” She answers in a tight voice. Her deep hazel eyes skim up and down his body with a conflicted look of interest. “When did you get cursed?”

“Two months ago.”

“Yeesh, you’re brand new.”

Will feels a small burst of irritation. He doesn’t like how flippant she is about this whole thing, but then again… “How long have you been… cursed.”

“Five years in March.”

A sharp pain pierces right through Will’s sternum. *Five years, five years, five years.* “I take it, then… there’s no cure?” He asks, though he already knows the answer.

Julianna shrugs. “Did it bite you or scratch you?”

“It matters?”

Julianna nods and lifts her hand to her shoulder, rubbing at a spot hidden by the chair but where Will is certain her own curse was bestowed. “Will, how much do you know about the

Rougarou?" She words this carefully like she's expecting him to jump up and deny that that's what he is, which of course, he isn't going to.

Will bites at the inside of his mouth as another wave of hopelessness tumbles over him. "Only what I've heard from stories. Old wives tales. Urban legends. I meant to uh… do more research, but I've been…"

"Too afraid to learn the truth?" Jules guesses with a sad little smile. "I was too. Until I didn't have a choice anymore. So which was it; a bite or a scratch?"

The scar on his sideburns and he absentmindedly runs his hand over it. "A bite."

Her face falls into the same devastation that Will feels right down to his core. "I'm sorry," She murmurs. "I'm so sorry. Bites mean the curse is permanent. No way out."

"Permanent?"

She nods.

Icy cold panic begins to set in then and Will's breathing catches. "So… there's *nothing* we can do?" He demands, begging her to tell him otherwise.

"I wish there was, Will." She answers regretfully. "You're a Rougarou now. Don't try to fight it either; because the more you resist the worse it gets. When the full moon comes you *need* to eat."

"And what happens if I don't?"

"You become a monster. A feral, starving monster whose only desire is to rip everyone and everything apart until your hunger is sated." She grits out with bitterness dripping from her tongue. "Trust me, I tried. You can't fight it."

Hopelessness and devastation quickly turn to rage and Will glares at Julianna with sharp eyes full of daggers. "Then why did René send me here?" He growls.

But Julianna doesn't seem to be fazed by his sudden aggression. She smiles sadly at him. "Because this is a lonely life. When I got turned, I blocked out everyone, including Grant for a while because I thought it would be safest. Luckily my brother never gave up on me, or I would have gone crazy after the first few months." She casts an affectionate smile over her shoulder at her brother's back. "I can live with myself now because I had him to anchor me. I have my brother. Who do you have?"

Will doesn't reply, but that says enough. *I have my brother. Who do you have?*

No one. Will has no one. With his father gone and buried, no mother, siblings, or people close enough to consider them friends, Will Graham is completely, utterly alone. He keeps to himself on purpose, considering that people are just generally very overwhelming and social situations are just as stressful, not to mention the darkness crawling around in his skull; all of his nightmares and fantasies…

A very small, very sad part of him aches for connection, for someone to reach back when he tries to reach out, someone who could see *all* of him and appreciate and love him for who and what he is…

And, in regular fashion, he quickly squashes that thought like a bully to a sand castle. If he had tried harder before the bite, if he had actually made an attempt, maybe he would have found his somebody, but it's too late now. Now Will Graham has a monster under his skin and it isn't safe for anyone to be his *somebody* anymore. He's on his own.

He always has been.

November 2013

A thick sense of anticipation is thrumming under Will's skin as he pulls their rental into the Hobbs' driveway. Actually, something has been beating alongside his heart since his decidedly *human* breakfast with the man sitting beside him who looks as suave and debonair as could be. Hannibal Lecter still has that inscrutable little smile on his face and for some reason, it's making him very nervous for reasons he doesn't quite understand yet.

So far though, Dr. Lecter hasn't given any indication that he knows that *Will* knows, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't. He has a very good mask, as good if not better than Will's own, though Dr. Lecter's mask seems to have been born out of confidence and choice than out of survival and necessity.

But is it, really?

Ugh, this fucking day.

Will sighs and into the center console for his bottle of aspirin, drops two pills into his hand, and swallows them dry. He's vaguely aware of Dr. Lecter watching, but Will ignores him. He has more pressing matters to handle right now.

He opens the car door and steps out with Dr. Lecter only feet behind him. He looks around at the seemingly normal house in a normal neighborhood, noting the swaying trees and the way the sunlight is beating down on the lawn to make it look exceptionally green. It's a beautiful area. A perfect place for a monster to hide.

A high-pitched wail of pain breaks him out of his thoughts and Will looks over to see who he assumes to be Garrett Jacob Hobbs shoving his bloody, dying wife out onto the porch and slamming the door shut behind them.

And suddenly, Will is running. He drops to his knees beside Mrs. Hobbs, who grabs weakly at his arms, coating him in her blood. He's gasping for air out of shock at what he's seeing, but deep down, underneath the fear and confusion, the Rougarou has smelled blood and is

currently trying to claw its way up Will's throat. Underneath his fingers, Mrs. Hobb's pulse stops.

A growl is rumbling its way out of his throat as he gets to his feet and storms toward the door. His senses are on fire; everything is brighter, clearer, sharper, the sound of blood seeping to the pavement like a babbling brook, and most dangerously, the monster hiding in his veins is thrumming with excitement from the idea of a hunt. Because that is what this is now; a hunt.

Will's boot makes contact with the door and the wood splits like a toothpick. His gun is raised, shaking in his hand, but steady enough as he ventures further into the home in search of his prey.

"Garrett Jacob Hobbs! FBI!" His voice is laced with the Rougarou's snarl, deep and threatening and poised for slaughter.

Another sound pierces through him like a tidal wave; a young voice, pleading and crying for help, and it gives the Rougarou pause. This can't be a hunt, at least, not a usual one. This is beyond ripping Hobbs away from his daughter the way he tore the pig off of Alexis Shepard ten years ago. He can't let himself lose control here.

He isn't meat right now. He's a suspect.

Will rounds the corner to the kitchen and makes eye contact with Hobbs. He has his daughter in his arms, pink in the face from sobbing, her bright eyes glassy with terrified tears while her father holds a knife to her throat. Hobbs is staring into Will's eyes, manic and angry, and protective of the child he's trying to murder.

Then Hobbs looks at his daughter.

Gravity centers. All sounds in the room fall into silence. The gun goes off as the blade slices through the daughter's skin, pumping *one, two, three, four* bullets…

Beneath Will's skin, the Rougarou is pushing to the surface, darkening his vision with murderous intent and the all-consuming hunger that never seems to fade.

Five, six, seven.

Hobbs' body flies back. The daughter drops to the floor.

Eight, nine, ten.

Everything is fuzzy around the edges. He drops to his knees beside the daughter, reaching desperately to hold the blood inside her while she chokes and gasps for breath. Will catches a glimpse of his face in the blood and sees two unnaturally bright eyes staring back at him. His monster has gone into overdrive, focused solely on protecting the daughter instead of the killer dying on the floor beside him.

"See?"

Will looks up at Hobbs, finding a sick little smile on his face. Hobbs doesn't look like a man right now; he looks like something out of nightmares, covered in flies and darkening, cold skin that pulls taut over his features.

"See?" He repeats.

The Rougarou snarls back, lips pulled over teeth, and the last emotion in Hobbs' eyes before the life drains from them is fear.

The daughter's watery gasps bring Will back to himself, and he goes to work trying to keep her alive. He hears himself murmuring *no, no, no* over and over again as she gets paler and less coherent until his hands are gently knocked away and replaced with Hannibal Lecter's own. Will gasps for air, temporarily panicked by being interrupted until he hears her choking begin to slow.

Will looks down at his blood-coated hands and inside him, his monster is still thrashing for control, sending tremors down his arms and twisting his thoughts between sinking his aching teeth into Hobbs' fresh corpse and running as far from here as he can.

Something touches his stomach and he jerks in surprise, only to find a small, delicate hand curling around the fabric of his shirt. The Hobbs daughter's eyes are still wide and terrified, glossy from how close to unconsciousness she is now, but her fingers stay clenched, keeping him there.

The Rougarou is still brimming below the surface, but when he meets Dr. Lecter's calm eyes and feels the tug of his shirt from where the Hobbs daughter is anchoring him in place, he decides he suddenly has nowhere else to be.

For the first time in almost ten years, the Rougarou ignores the ache in his teeth and the feeling of hunger.

For the first time in ten years, Will Graham ignores the call of blood.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Hello again everyone!
This is going to be the last chapter full of time-skips for a minute! I wanted to get as much lore in here as I possibly could, but I do have an actual plot coming, I promise! And, Hannigram is coming! I hope you all like this, I hope no one is bored with me yet. I swear there's a plot on its way! If you have questions about my version of the Rougarou here, please let me know!
Canary

See the end of the chapter for more notes

May 2004

"The Rougarou who changed me…"

Jules pauses her work in the garden and glances up at Will with a questioning look. "Your creator?"

Will swallows down the sneer that squirms behind his teeth. It's almost been a year, but the bitterness has only grown stronger. He hates that Jules refers to the ones who cursed them as *creators* . Creator implies the transformation was a beautiful act of life rather than damnation. But he won't argue with her on it. It's not his place, and if that's how she copes, who is Will to tell her differently? "He was bipedal. He looked like a… well, a *real* werewolf. A Hollywood werewolf."

Her eyes widen in understanding and she sits back on her heels and slips the gardening gloves off. "He got the claws. The temporary curse."

"Then why am I still…" He sighs and runs a hand over his face. "Why am I not *temporary?"*

"I don't really understand it myself, but from everything I've seen, the severity of the change depends on *how* the change happens," She answers. "Claws mean the curse is temporary, jaws mean it's permanent, but regardless of your… your *type,* I suppose, if you bite someone, they're stuck with it."

"That doesn't make any sense."

Jules glares at him, but it's laced with pity that he can't stand. "I'm not an expert, Will. It's not like there are scientists out there studying Rougarou. We're not supposed to exist. We have to make our own way."

Will feels his body slump, and he sinks down to the grass beside her. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Grant looking at him, watching his movements and searching for danger. He appreciates how protective he is of his sister, but Will Graham walks around with an air of darkness that often leads to cautious leering and distrust from others. It gets discouraging after a while.

You're a monster now, kid. Get used to being on your own.

"I'm sorry," He says quietly.

Her glare thaws out and she offers him a sad smile. "Apology accepted. I was angry like you too in the beginning. It gets easier after a while."

Will highly doubts that, but he keeps it to himself. "How many other Rougarou have you come across since you were changed?" He asks instead.

"Four, including you. My creator was the first; he got the bite so when it happened I thought he was just a big dog. Boy, was I fuckin' wrong." She chuckles humorlessly and fidgets with her basil plant. "A few months later I met one of the Clawed. She was hunting me while I was hunting her, but the thing you need to understand about the temporary curse is that none of them have control. No rational human thoughts, just instinct. Most times, they wake up not remembering what they did, or to whom. A Clawed could see the face of their victim on the news and they'd have no idea that they killed them."

He considers this and for a brief moment feels envious. What Will wouldn't give to forget the things he's done. "Then the curse goes away and it's… what, just a nightmare?"

"Pretty much."

"What happened to her?"

Jules goes very quiet, and the hot Louisiana air suddenly feels ice cold around them. "Like I said, they run on pure instinct. No rhyme or reason to their hunts. They can be lethal but only because they're basically feral. They can be… *easy* to take down if you distract them."

Will feels his stomach tighten with anxiety. "You killed her." He guesses.

"She was trying to kill *me."*

"I'm not a cop right now. You don't need to justify it to me."

"All the same," She sighs. "She's the only other of our kind that I've killed. I expected an angry pack to come after me, but no one came."

"Are Rougarou pack hunters?"

She shrugs. "I believe we could be in some other world, but considering how rare we are and how secretive of a life we all keep so that nobody has a chance to section us, I don't think it would work. I think about it sometimes, just because. That sense of family that a pack has…" She glances over at Grant who is busying himself with building some sort of flowerbed

across the yard. “G’s the only family I’ll ever have, though. It’s better, with this life, to be solitary. I’ve wanted to be a mom since I was a kid, but that’ll never happen now.”

Something about the way she says it sends a trickle of unease through his head. “Why never?”

“Because I got the bite. My whole biology was basically rewritten, Will, come on.”

“Are you… You mean the curse can get passed down?” He demands.

Julianna nods slowly, pain and regret burning in her eyes. “The third Rougarou I met was bloodline. His grandfather got the bite, passed it to his mother, then she passed it to him.”

Will’s mind is reeling and a new, very unfamiliar sense of defeat makes his body feel heavy and exhausted. He was never really connected to the idea of a family. He doesn’t *dislike* children, but they were never for him. It always seemed like something for someone else. But the knowledge that it isn’t even a possibility anymore feels… bitter.

Actually, everything feels bitter.

He’s stopped spending the full moon in the city, choosing to spend the night deep in the bayou where no one can find him. Cecile didn’t question him when he requested two days off every month and to his relief she hasn’t seemed to notice that his days off coincided with the moon either. Of course, it had been pretty easy to convince her when he stated that he was quote, *“making time for his mental health”.* For once he’s almost grateful that people are constantly wary of and/or worried about him. It makes lying easier.

Ten lives he has taken so far. Each month Will Graham tries to fight against the hunger, and each month, regardless of how much he consumes the morning of the full moon, come nightfall he can’t fight it anymore. The Rougarou takes him over, splitting his skin like an over-stuffed toy until he’s nothing but fur and claws and sharp teeth that ache until they’ve sunken into the throat of some homeless man that never saw him coming. Each time the hunt satisfies his hunger, but leaves Will feeling more hallowed out than whole.

He doesn’t know who he is anymore, other than a monster. He wakes up after his hunt, puts on his badge and uniform, and goes out to save lives while every fiber of his body yearns to take them.

How much more will you take from me? He asks the monster inside of him. He isn’t satisfied when there isn’t an answer.

November 2013

Christ, has he actually read all of these? Will thinks to himself as he peruses the upper library of Hannibal Lecter’s office. He runs his fingers over the spine of a well-loved psychiatry journal, almost feeling the years and years of attention it has been given from the

cracks in the leather to the faded title. *He probably has. This is probably the shit he reads before bed.*

The sound of footsteps across the wooden floor snaps his attention around. Dr. Lecter is looking down at an official-looking document with a stamp on the bottom of the page. It's too far away for Will to tell what it is. He looks up and briefly catches a glimpse of blood-honey irises gleaming back at him. "What's that?"

"Your psychological evaluation," He answers with a smile. "You are totally functional and more or less sane. Well done."

Will is briefly thrown by this. "Did you just rubber-stamp me?"

"Yes. Jack Crawford may lay his weary head to rest knowing he didn't break you, and our conversation can proceed unobstructed by paperwork."

Well then. The gratitude he feels is a little surprising; Dr. Lecter is absolutely a killer masquerading around the Baltimore elite, as well as a psychiatrist. Neither of those occupations is trustworthy, but, all the same, Will appreciates the gesture, even if he's only doing it to get inside Will's head.

"Jack thinks I need therapy." He starts pacing again just to keep his body alert and keeps his eyes on the floor.

"What you need is a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there."

"The last time he sent me into a dark place, I brought something back."

"A surrogate daughter?"

He falters and flicks his eyes over Dr. Lecter's pristine form. All of the memories from that day come flooding back all at once; Abigail Hobbs's delicate hand gripping his shirt, Hannibal Lecter holding her together, Garrett Jacob Hobbs' body just feet from him, still warm but no longer alive. Most of all, he remembers the control he felt that day when the Rougarou tried to fight its way out and he was able to resist.

That's why he's here, for fuck's sake. Special Agent Will Graham has never officially killed anyone in the eyes of the law, so Alana's little 'deadly force encounter' spiel hadn't been *wrong,* per se, but what the entire BAU doesn't is that Will's little catatonic breakdown at the scene had nothing to do with the life he took.

Once ERT arrived on the scene, Will was told to step outside and let them take over. Abigail Hobbs had still been semi-conscious when he got up, and the moment her fingers fell from his shirt and he no longer had her or even Dr. Lecter to focus on, the Rougarou became unsettled. The blood and viscera from the scene flooded his senses and made it hard to breathe because each time he took the scent, the hungrier he became. He was still fighting the same fight when they started asking questions, and even Jack couldn't break him out of it for a while, which didn't help his case.

The strangest part of the whole moment was how much he wanted to go back inside the house where Dr. Lecter and Abigail Hobbs were. He wanted to sit there while they stabilized her, watch Dr. Lecter help them save her life with everything in his sightline so that nothing and no one could sneak up for an attack. Looking back, it was a ridiculous fucking thought; the place was literally *crawling* with FBI agents and cops, but that didn't stop his skin from itching with the need to protect. (It wasn't just Abigail he wanted to protect either. He wanted to protect Hannibal Lecter too—not that he needs Will's protection.)

He's so lost in thought that it takes him a moment to realize that Dr. Lecter is talking again. "You saved Abigail Hobbs' life, you also orphaned her. It comes with certain emotional obligations regardless of empathy disorders."

"You were there, you saved her life too. Do you feel *obligated?"* He snaps back.

"Yes. I feel a staggering amount of obligation. I feel responsibility."

Will is once again surprised by the directness. Admittedly he hadn't given much thought to how Dr. Lecter was feeling about this whole situation before now, but he's pleased that they're on the same page about it. It's good to know he isn't the only one that cares about the girl they saved together.

September 2004

Will likes Canada in the fall; it's beautiful and vibrant and so different than down south. He loves the wildlife and the land. He loves how peaceful it is.

He's been thinking about moving a lot recently too. He loves New Orleans, but the longer he stays in his home city with this curse on his shoulders, the more all the music, culture, and art become… stained. Maybe if he moved away to somewhere in the middle of nowhere, got a couple of dogs, maybe then everything would change. Maybe his perception of himself would change. That would be nice.

Will wants to stop hating himself. He wants that more than anything. Maybe moving would change that.

He can't though, not yet at least. He can't leave Louisiana until he has as much information on the Rougarou as he can find. Werewolf legends spread across the entire world, but Rougarou only come from Louisiana. Julianna and Grant have extensively looked for other monsters like them, but so far it seems like they're the only ones. Not a vampire, Mothman, or mermaid to be found (he's not sure if this is a good thing or a bad thing yet). No other werewolves either, which was slightly more surprising and slightly disappointing. It makes him feel more isolated.

But, that is why he has come here.

It had taken weeks to coax the names out of Julianna, but she had eventually come through with not only names, phone numbers, and addresses, but she also called in advance to make sure he would be allowed to venture here without issue. (Will is already planning on buying her the most expensive bottle of whiskey he can find for her as a thank you.)

Nellie and Russell LeBlanc are a very wonderful couple. On the outside, they look almost normal with their pedestrian jobs, the mini-van in the garage, and the child's cartoons on the television set. Their son, a two-year-old named Sam, is sitting in a highchair by the table, smashing his carrots instead of eating them, paying the strange man at their dinner table no attention. No one would look at this family and think that they were monsters underneath (though, looking at them, they seem even more human than Will).

"Would you like dessert, Will?" Nellie pops her head out of the kitchen to ask. "I made an apple pie this morning."

Will dips his head in thanks. "Sounds delicious. Thank you."

She flashes him a pleased smile and disappears again.

Russell chuckles from across the table. "You're gonna leave here a hundred pounds heavier, man. She loves to feed people."

"She's a very good cook."

"That she is."

Beside Russell, little Sam lets out a growl of joy at the mush of carrots on his tray, the sound much deeper than a baby should be capable of. His dad leans over and wipes food from his mouth. "Oh yeah, bud? Tell me all about it."

Will doesn't bother to suppress his chuckle.

"He's gonna be a handful when he changes for the first time," Russell says lightheartedly.

"When did you realize that he was… like you two?"

"Oh, Nell knew immediately," He answers just as his wife re-enters the room with three plates of apple pie. He smiles at her like she hung the moon and for some reason, it makes Will's heart pang with sadness he doesn't understand. "She could tell when she was still pregnant that he was one of us."

Nellie presses a kiss to her son's head before sitting back down. "Pack-mother intuition." She says. "I don't suspect he'll change for the first time until next year at least."

"That's when I changed for the first time," Russell adds.

Will takes all of this in with a strange sense of awe. The LaBlanc family is so blase about their way of life, not bogged down with what they are or what they have to do to survive. They even had a child knowing the outcome was possible. He glances between them curiously. "How did you two meet?"

“We were both hunting in the same forest about six years ago,” Nellie explains, smiling lovingly at her husband. “I’m not a bloodline Rougarou like Rus. I was new to the game at the time, new and scared. He helped me through it, and we ended up falling in love.”

“Rougarou mate for life, Will,” Russell explains. He reaches out and twines his fingers with Nellie’s. Will watches their locked hands covetously. “We don’t always end up with others like us, though. My Daddy wasn’t one of us, but he loved my Momma, just like my Nana loved my Grandad.”

This is venturing into painful territory that Will isn’t ready to face, so he quickly deflects. “How many others have you met?”

He pauses for a moment to think. “In my thirty-eight years, probably a baker’s dozen.”

“Most of them bitten?”

“Most of them, yeah.”

Will shifts a little in his seat and steals a quick glance at the baby like he’s afraid of scaring him with his questions. “I was bitten by one of the Clawed ones. I don’t remember anything after he bit me, but I woke up and he was gone. He attacked me, bit me, then just… left. Why?”

Russell and Nellie exchange a grave look, and it’s Nellie who answers him. “You’re not going to like the answer, honey, but… I’ll tell you if you want to know.”

He nods despite the fear that trickles down his spine. “I want to know.”

“He let you live because he saw you as a worthy opponent.” She says carefully. “You said you fought him off. The Clawed run on bare instinct, I’m sure Julianna told you that. Your creator could sense your power, and he decided to change you so that if you crossed paths again, he could take you on again.”

Will’s heart pounds and pounds. “He wants a rematch at some point. But, he was a Clawed. He’s got the temporary curse. It’s well past a hundred and one days since I—”

“Then you should count yourself lucky, Will,” Russell says, not unkindly. “Bloodsport with a Rougarou is not something you want to engage in, believe me.”

Will thinks back to the monster in the woods and a shiver goes down his spine. He doesn’t feel very lucky at all. Although the idea of his *"creator"* coming after him is frightening, Will finds that he's disappointed that he'll never have the chance to tear him to shreds for what he's done.

Chapter End Notes

Next up? Hannigram. <3

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

> Hello you lovelies!
> I am SO fucking sorry this has taken so long, but I hope this long, Hannigram-filled chapter is enough to make up for it. I already have parts of the next chapter written and hope to post it soon! I've been working non-stop and my health hasn't been the greatest, so please forgive all the delays. I will be back and SOON, I promise. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Killing must feel close to God too. He does it all the time. And are we not created in his image?"

"Depends who you ask."

"God's terrific. He dropped a church roof on thirty-four of his worshipers last Wednesday night in Texas while they sang a hymn."

"Did God feel good about that?"

"He felt powerful."

Will Graham had never really considered himself a religious person. Growing up in Louisiana and spending countless years throughout the Bible Belt influenced him to have certain beliefs and rules, but he was never a believer. After he was cursed, any sense of *God* he may have had went out the door.

Hannibal Lecter seems to believe in God, but not as a follower. It seems more conceptual than an actual belief, or perhaps Hannibal thinks of himself as someone who could stand beside the Lord himself on a higher pedestal. That seems more accurate.

And, seemingly, he believes Will to be made of the right stuff to stand right beside him.

Hannibal Lecter. The psychiatrist. The cannibal. The serial killer. Probably the Chesapeake Ripper. Will's… what? Colleague? Co-parent of a surrogate daughter who might be a killer and whose biological father was *also* a serial killer? *Friend?*

No, definitely not friend. They're not nearly close enough for that.

Technically, he and Hannibal are supposed to be enemies. Will may be a killer, but his reasons for murder are biological, not for the sake of… well, honestly, Will has no idea what Hannibal's motives are yet, but they're not the same. They're *not.*

(When did he start referring to him as Hannibal?)

Will sighs and glances over at the kitchen clock. It's only six PM which seems impossible because it simultaneously feels like two PM and midnight all at the same time. *Time flies when you're becoming obsessed,* he only half-jokes.

God, he really is though, isn't he? For the last week and a half, maybe more, Will has been spiraling down a rather serious rabbit hole of *What To Do About Hannibal Lecter* with no conclusion in sight. He can't lie and say that he isn't *endlessly* fascinated with the man when Dr. Lecter has quite literally turned his life upside-down. He doesn't make sense. His lifestyle, his aesthetics, his poetic way of speaking, they're all odd and eccentric, but on the outside, they don't scream *murderer.* No wonder the man has never been caught. Hell, could *Will* even catch him if he wanted to?

(Well, of course, he *could,* but it would be less of an arrest and more of a meal, but disturbingly, Will doesn't *want* to make a meal out of Hannibal Lecter. He just… doesn't quite know what he *does* want to do with him yet.)

He sighs again and looks around at his quiet, empty little house. His pack is milling about, lazily chewing on toys or snoozing in the waning evening light. He's too restless to work on the boat engine that is still propped up against the wall; if he tried to start, he would probably fuck it up. Too many thoughts taking over his head.

He could bother Dr. Lecter, but he has no real reason to. If he called and tried to be casual for information, Hannibal is probably smart enough to figure him out. That is decidedly a bad idea.

He needs to do something though, or else he's going to start climbing the fucking walls.

It takes a few minutes of contemplation, but once his mind is made up, Will stands and goes to grab his keys.

The steady beeping of the heart monitor is monotonous enough that Will can basically tune it out now. He's spent so many nights here that even the sterile, nose-burning hospital scent doesn't bother him either, though the rough, itchy blankets he could definitely do without.

He's chosen to sit in the chair beside Abigail's bed this time instead of the bench at her feet. He can still see the entryway if he cranes his neck, but he's stopped bothering with sightlines as much in the last couple of years, considering that his instincts are sharper than the average human and would know instantly if someone entered the room.

Will watches the girl he saved lying still in her bed, hooked up to all manner of tubes and wires, and feels a hollow ache in his chest. He killed her father right in front of her, almost did worse than pump him full of bullets. He both hopes and dreads that she will wake up soon; though there is a part of him that is dying to actually speak to her, he can't deny that he's afraid of what she'll say. She could resent him for all he knows, and he couldn't exactly blame her for it. Hobbs' obsessive love couldn't have been completely one-sided; there is a

chance that she was attached to him. Then Will killed him so that she could live. He saved her, but he orphaned her, just like Hannibal said. Saved her, damned her…

At the same time, maybe she saved him too in a sense, her and Dr. Lecter. He could have lost it that day at the Hobbs' house the moment he smelled blood, but that had been almost easy to fight against until it most decidedly *wasn't.* Watching Abigail's throat be slit, seeing her drop to the floor while Hobbs moved in to make a killing blow had grated against his resistance. Hobbs' taunting had nearly undone him.

The only thing that kept the Rougarou at bay was Hannibal Lecter dropping beside him to save Abigail, and Abigail's delicate hand curled into the front of his t-shirt. (Guiltily, Will thinks of the shirt that remains in a plastic evidence bag in the back of his closet; he'll never wear it again, but he can't find it in him to throw the damn thing out.) This is yet another reason why Will can't commit to killing Hannibal or turning him in. Whatever happened to Will in that house has never happened before, and Will doesn't want to let it go. *Can't* let it go. It's all so complicated.

All of the thinking is giving him a goddamn headache, so he turns his attention back to the girl. He pushes his anxious thoughts aside and tries to smile. "I talked to my dad when he was in a coma, y'know." He says softly, not entirely sure why, but not willing to stop. "He was so sick before he died that the only thing he wanted to talk about was sports, so when he slipped under, it was the only thing I could think of to talk about. You uh… you don't strike me as a sports fan, so I won't do that."

Predictably, Abigail doesn't respond.

Will leans forward, now close enough that he can see the livid mark on the side of her neck and the greasy, unclean strands of auburn hair that cover the pillow. He isn't very good at talking, but luckily she can't hear his verbal blundering. "Alana brought a book to read," He adds, eying the Flannery O'Connor novel on the bedside table. "But uh… when I was little, or sick, my Dad was a busy man. He was always working, so he never really read me stories. He would just… tell them.

"I'm from New Orleans, so a lot of my Dad's stories were more like folktales. Urban legends." He frowns. "Come to think of it, I don't know if I have any stories that are uh… bedtime story worthy, so maybe not." He laughs at his own awkwardness, which has somehow reached astronomical levels despite the fact that he's speaking to a comatose patient who can't even hear him.

I could tell her a Rougarou story. Just for a laugh. It's not like she'd remember.

Will contemplates this for a second longer, then turns to look over his shoulder to see the hallway. It's still clear. No one is paying attention to them.

"People say," He begins quietly, keeping his voice just above a whisper. "That Louisiana has a curse. It could have been brought over when Haitian and Romani slaves were brought to the land centuries ago as a punishment for the wrongdoings of the white men. But, some believe it has always been there, wrapped inside the bark of every tree, buried in the deepest part of every bayou, every blade of grass. Over the years, the story has become just as I said; a

folktale. A way to keep the kids in line, like uh… when they tell you *'don't sit too close to the TV or you'll get cancer',* or *'don't eat the watermelon seeds or else a watermelon will grow in your stomach'."* A smirk pulls at the corner of his mouth for just a second. "But, the moment the sun goes down, no one ventures into the woods alone.

"Every now and again, some unfortunate soul will wander into the forest after dark, unaware of the full moon overhead, and there, if they are very, very unfortunate, they will encounter a creature." Will lets the words fall from his tongue and hang in the air. A part of him is screaming at him to shut up, that he shouldn't be doing this, but he continues nonetheless. "The creature has many descriptions and many names, and many choose not to say it in case it evokes the curse. Some say it looks like a man, some say it looks like a wolf…"

Will doesn't tell her his tale. He doesn't tell her the stories of Julianna or Russell and Nellie LaBlanc out of respect and privacy. Instead, he tells her the tale of a Rougarou he met several years earlier; Cameron Howard. He was a fifteen-year-old boy who got the bite and then ran away from home to deal with his curse alone. He encountered a pack of real wolves on his travels and, choosing to stay in his wolf form, he was able to integrate himself into the pack.

When Will asked him why he stayed with the wolves instead of making a human life, he simply replied it was better for him. *"I'm too in touch with my instincts now, I could never survive in a city environment with normal people and a normal job. Plus, this way I never have to pay taxes."* That had made Will laugh, but it had made him think about doing the same. Just running away, going completely off-grid where he could never be a danger to anyone or anything…

He had dismissed it almost instantly. It felt too much like giving in or giving up.

He keeps all of these details out of his story to Abigail. He keeps it vague and borderline cheerful, tells her about how the boy with a monster under his skin protects his pack like any family would, how he plays with the pups and keeps them strong, and how he keeps the hunters away from their home.

"The boy kept the hunters going. They chased him through the woods, far away from his pack for nearly a mile until he jumped into the river. He changed back to human underwater and pretended to be taking a bath when the hunters approached. They fell for it if you can believe it, but they left disappointed and without a wolf to collect as a trophy, or—"

He gets so lost in his tale of half-truths that he doesn't notice the approaching footsteps until they're already in the room. Will's head snaps around to face the new intruder.

"Pardon me, I didn't mean to startle you, Will." Hannibal Lecter says apologetically.

Will's stomach is a flurry of emotions and anxieties; both good and bad. It's ridiculous to think that Hannibal would take a silly story to heart if he heard it, especially since the Rougarou legends are public knowledge to anyone with access to Google, but there is a touch of unease that Will can't shake, knowing he was caught speaking about the curse in the first place.

On the other hand, being in Dr. Lecter's presence is hard; just like it always is when you know things about another person that they don't know that *you* know, things you *shouldn't* know.

(On the *other* other hand, being around Dr. Lecter is weirdly comforting. Maybe it's the way he knows exactly how far to push Will for answers so that he doesn't shut down. Maybe it's the connection to Abigail Hobbs. Maybe it's the darkness that Hannibal has that certainly rivals Will's. Maybe it's just because Hannibal is understanding and doesn't shy away from the weird shit that Will says. Maybe it's just because Hannibal is undeniably a handsome man who smiles when Will is a total bitch instead of running far, far away as he should.

It could be any of these things, or maybe a few of them. Maybe it isn't any of them. Who the fuck knows?)

Will offers him a polite half-smile despite his discomfort. "You didn't. What are you doing here?"

"I had an early end to my work day," Hannibal explains as he sheds his overcoat and drapes it over the back of the chair on the other side of the room. "I try to visit Abigail when I can."

Ah, so the chair I'm in may actually be his usually. It's nice to know that he isn't the only one who comes here at night.

"Me too."

Hannibal smiles slightly at that, but Will can't tell if it's because he already knows this to be the case, or if he's also pleased to not be the only one who cares. It's impossible to tell. Regardless, he moves to Abigail's bedside and begins checking the monitors and charts with a clinical eye. Will watches him carefully the entire time.

"What brought you here tonight?" Hannibal asks without looking up.

"I was feeling restless."

"Any particular reason why?"

Will scoffs. *Fucking psychiatrists.* "Are we in session, Doctor?"

Hannibal glances up at him with a slight smirk, then, while maintaining eye contact that Will can't bring himself to break, he settles down into the opposite chair and crosses his legs like they would in his office. "Would you like to be?"

His tone is so clinical and serious that it makes Will laugh. "No. I'm good on that, thanks."

The response is nothing more than the quirk of a smile, a crack in the mask that Hannibal Lecter wears, but it makes Will's stomach feel tight. Will looks the man over, takes in the sight of the crisp white shirt underneath the rich navy blue waistcoat that matches the slacks. His sleeves are rolled to his elbows, showcasing the golden skin of his forearms. To his dismay, Will realizes that this enigmatic, asshole cannibal is actually rather striking to look

at; all of the angular lines of his face and the color of his eyes that isn't quite gold but definitely is too bloodstained to be considered brown either. Like blood mixed with fresh honey. He's refined and crisp around the edges, his presence is so sharp you could cut yourself just looking at him.

Beyond that, he's so intense sometimes that he makes Will's heart race with every precisely placed jab about sin and morality, and beauty. And yet, Will can't get enough of it. It's strange really—despite what Hannibal is, Will feels comfortable with him, and he doesn't really want to know what that means.

He has to drop his eyes and focus on Abigail Hobbs instead, just so the knot that's lodged below his sternum will start to unfurl. Hannibal keeps on staring, boring holes into the side of Will's head like he's trying to see directly into his brain through his scalp and skull.

"I may need to use one of my infrequent apologies for this," Hannibal eventually says, snapping Will's attention back. He's smiling again, polite but intrigued for some reason. "But I was rather enjoying listening to your story. The shapeshifting boy alluding human hunters."

Shit. He did hear me. Despite the overwhelming urge to flinch, Will just stares back in silence.

Undeterred by Will's awkwardness (he's hoping Hannibal thinks that Will is just embarrassed about being caught telling a bedtime story and not that he's actually anxious), he presses on with: "What became of the boy?"

He doesn't *seem* like he suspects anything, but Hannibal Lecter is so fucking hard to read.

(In the back of Will's head, his rational side tells him that Hannibal has no reason to suspect Will of anything at all and to stop being so paranoid. *No one knows that you're a monster because your type of monster is not supposed to exist in this world.)*

Still, just to be cautious, Will replies: "It's just a story, Dr. Lecter."

"Naturally. I would very much like to hear it anyway."

Yeah, and naturally I don't want to tell you, you pushy… "There really wasn't much else." He answers slowly. *It would be more suspicious to not tell it now.* "The hunters were disappointed that the wolf got away, and the… the *shapeshifter* went back to his pack once they left."

Hannibal dips his head in acknowledgment. "And they all lived happily ever after?"

"Something like that."

"I am curious…"

"Oh, there's a shock."

Hannibal doesn't exactly glare, but it's a near thing. Although the smile that follows looks a little too indulgent. Will genuinely can't tell if Hannibal wants to take him out for dinner or

make *Will* into dinner. “I am *curious,”* He tries again. “Why that story?”

“I don’t know. I just… started talking.”

“Was it a story of your own creation?”

Will can’t help it. He covers his mouth to stifle the laughter that bubbles up from his chest and tries to pretend like Hannibal Lecter isn’t smiling back almost triumphantly. “Uh, no. It’s uh… one someone told me a long time ago. Around a campfire.” He explains. Technically, that isn’t a lie either; Cameron had told him this story around a fire.

Seemingly satisfied with this answer, Hannibal tilts his head and stares off to the side of the room. “Often we find ourselves more afraid of ghost stories told around a fire. The light makes shadows on the trees and the forest echoes back with alarming dissonance. Even a tale meant to be light-hearted can be frightening there. Are you fond of ghost stories, Will?”

“I think I live through enough ghost stories on my own, thanks.” Will snaps back, unease making the words taste sour.

“Quite so. Perhaps not then.” There is the barest hint of a peacemaking grin, then Hannibal turns to watch Abigail’s still form in between them. “She is going to wake soon.” Hannibal notes with a glance back. “Will you be at her side when she does?”

The sudden shift in conversation spins Will’s head around on an axis. His mouth feels strangely dry and he has to clear his throat before the words will come out. “I would like to be.”

Hannibal nods. “As would I.”

Will can’t look away from him. Hannibal Lecter’s words have a way of sinking into his skin and encircling each of his veins until they’ve sunk to Will’s core. How does he do that? How does he push every button he can and then bring it back like it was nothing? And how does Will keep *forgiving him for it?*

More importantly, what is his game here? If Will didn’t know what he knew, Hannibal seems like a person concerned about someone they saved, but there’s *something* in his eyes that sits like lead in Will’s stomach.

And *that* is when dawn erupts through Will’s entire body and the dots connect in beautiful little bloody lines right before his eyes.

A gift-wrapped crime scene, *an actual gift.* The missing lungs from Cassie Boyle’s impaled body, the definitely-human “sausage” in the protein scramble. The untraceable call to the Hobbs’ house. Dr. Lecter playing clumsy at the construction site, dropping the files on the bitchy receptionist…

And then Will let him go back inside while he took care of the pile on the ground, *stupid, stupid,* stupid.

How many monsters fit inside of you, Dr. Lecter? The Ripper, the Copycat… how many different killers have you been? What made you this way?

And why can't I make myself turn you in?

Hannibal catches him staring and Will quickly conceals whatever emotion may be betrayed on his face. It's doubtful that the good Doctor would kill him here in this very public hospital room. Plus, there isn't anything on his face that betrays that he suspects Will knows anything at all. (After all, for the last ten years, all Will has done is lie—he's probably as good of a liar as Hannibal is.)

He figures he should say something else just to break the silence, but it turns out, Hannibal Lecter beats him to it.

"Have you eaten this evening, Will?"

Will takes a deep breath. *When life gives you fucking lemons.*

"You live in Dracula's castle," Will announces when Hannibal comes around the corner into the rather eccentric and darkened, stunning dining room.

His host quirks an eyebrow, amused instead of offended as anyone else would be, and Will sheepishly follows up with: "I do actually mean that as a compliment."

Hannibal grins as he comes round the table and places what appears to be a chicken dish in front of Will. *"Poulet de Bresse."* He explains, his accent making the words sound almost smokey. "A dish dating back to 1591, made from what they refer to as 'the most delicious chicken in France'. The roosters they choose are required to follow a very strict diet and lifestyle plan to maintain their flavor before slaughter."

"Alors, ils chouchoutent leur nourriture avant de la manger?" Will adds. The language rolls off of his tongue with ease, despite not having spoken French consistently since he left New Orleans.

There is a pause, just the slightest hesitation in Hannibal's movements when he sits down in his own chair. If Will hadn't been looking, he would have missed it. He blinks several times like he's surprised, or… *does he look flustered?* Will wonders, studying the doctor's face.

Quickly enough, Hannibal snaps out of it and promptly begins pouring them each more wine with a pleasant smile. "They insist on it. As do I."

The joke doesn't go over Will's head; its gruesome implication uttered as a private joke is *abundantly* clear. However, Will doesn't recoil in disgust. Without even really meaning to, he actually smiles back.

He eats people. Stop laughing at his fucking jokes.

"Shall we?" Hannibal asks, gesturing down at their meal.

Will takes a moment to inhale the savory smell of meat, and immediately, the Rougarou is awake, perching under his gums and making his teeth itch and ache with the longing to devour. He cuts off a small piece and brings it to his lips.

God, it's like an atomic bomb went off in his mouth. The rich flavor of the meat explodes across Will's tongue and sends his monster thrashing and howling with malicious delight. This is *not* chicken. This did *not* come from a prized French bird.

I wonder what you did to end up here. He thinks toward the meal.

A soft growl is beginning to build in his chest, but Will quickly covers it up with a content, polite hum. *"Christ."* He bites out before he can stop himself. "Sorry, just… this is delicious."

"I'm happy you enjoy it."

Will *does* enjoy it. Fuck, he really, *really* does. Not only is Dr. Lecter's cooking phenomenal, but as they fall into a comfortable silence, he realizes that the ever-present hunger and the hollow feeling in his teeth begins to fade as it does after a satisfying hunt the more he consumes their meal. Hannibal Lecter's darker nature actually… *helps.*

Out of nowhere, Hannibal shocks him out of his thoughts by flipping the conversation once again. "You speak French." He says with sparkling interest.

Though he's still staggering mentally, Will is nothing if not an adaptable man, as well as a very fast learner. He nods as he reaches out to take his wine glass and arranges his voice to come out steady. "I was born in New Orleans. Technically, I speak Creole, but it's similar enough."

Hannibal actually looks intrigued by this, as if Will being from the South is interesting, which is a little disarming. "Cajun French has a unique sound."

"It's a unique language." Will agrees with a shrug. "My Dad called it 'language soup.' You have French, Haitian, several African languages, Romanes, a little Spanish. Makes it rougher around the edges. Not as… *pretty,* I guess."

There is another pause, and it's with horror that Will realizes his meticulously swallowed-down Louisiana drawl came tumbling out of his mouth without his knowledge or consent, while he's sat across the table from his fucking *serial killer therapist* having dinner.

But, below that terrible thought, there is the ancient part of Will that feels a little nervous each time this happens. He hid it for a reason. *"You better shapen up that voice of yours if you wanna move outta here one day, boy,"* His father told him this when he was sixteen. They lived in South Carolina at the time, and Will was exhausted by the Bible Belt. Beau wasn't surprised; he simply laughed and continued with: *"Up North, they won't take you serious if they think you're from the swamps."*

Unfortunately, it proved to be true. No matter how smart Will is, no matter how good he is at what he does, people on this side of the tracks hear that *twang* and suddenly they look at him

a little differently. (Not that people really look at Will Graham with much of anything beyond careful apprehension, but once they hear it, they all have the same thought; Will Graham is both weird *and* a hick.)

Why would the good Dr. Lecter be any different?

“I would argue that roughness and beauty are not mutually exclusive.”

Whatever air was left in Will’s body inexplicably vanishes as if his lungs have forgotten how to expand. Hannibal’s voice has dropped to a low, hypnotic rumble that spreads like liquid sparks up Will’s spine and makes his chest feel tight and fluttery. Slowly, he looks up over his glass across the table at Hannibal Lecter’s face illuminated by the firelight, and for however brief a second, a hunger that has nothing to do with food passes through dark amber eyes.

That’s not supposed to happen.

Will knows he’s blushing. He can feel the warmth creeping up his neck, so he tries to hide his face behind his wine glass. There is absolutely no way that Hannibal Lecter is *flirting* with him. Absolutely no way. But, when Will looks up again, Hannibal still hasn’t looked away, and even the wolf inside of him is struck speechless.

Hannibal Lecter, on the other hand, doesn’t look disarmed at all. “I have a passion for the macabre, but also very beautiful things.” He says, reaching for his own wine glass without looking away from Will. “I find there is plenty of overlap between them.”

Will’s mouth abruptly feels very dry. “Uh, yeah. I can see that.” He glances around the ostentatious cobalt dining room, eying the fireplace and the painting of *Leda and the Swan* on the wall and the centerpiece of flowers and bone, like something you would see on a pagan altar. *Beauty and horror indeed.* “You live on your own?”

“Yes. I often have dinner guests and I host several dinner parties and various soirées throughout the year, so my home never feels empty.” Hannibal pauses, giving Will a pointed look across the table. “But, no, I am not married, if that is what you were asking.”

“It wasn’t…” Well. He can’t really lie; he was curious. This is a massive house and a beautiful one, though it seems too empty to be just for Hannibal Lecter. Though, being what he is, it would also make sense for there not to be a partner waiting at home. “It wasn’t *not* what I was asking, I suppose.”

(A fevered adrenaline rush tumbles through Will’s body—for whatever fucking reason, he *really* hopes that Hannibal is just as alone as he is.)

Before this subject can get out of hand, Will gives him a taste of his own medicine and counters with: “If you don’t mind me asking; why the hell are you a psychiatrist if you can cook like this?”

Hannibal doesn’t look offended at all. He smiles back, prideful and full of well-earned arrogance. “Food is a hobby, if not my favorite pastime. Providing psychological care has proven to be more fulfilling in my professional life.”

“Worried that making it a career would taint the passion?”

“If you’d like.” He agrees. “And where does your passion lie outside the FBI’s doors, Will?”

He lets out a self-conscious little chuckle. “Nothing that would interest you.”

“You may be surprised.”

“I like to fish.” He says. “There’s uh… there’s a stream in the woods near my home that I go to when I have the time. I’m good at mechanics, I guess. I have an old boat motor I’ve been putting back together.”

Oddly enough, Hannibal looks… maybe not *impressed,* but he’s definitely interested. *Fuck knows why.* “On your own?”

“You know it.” Will scoffs and pops another piece of *‘chicken’* into his mouth. “I’m not really a… people person.”

“I would argue that your empathy forces you to be too much of a *‘people person’* in your daily life. It is understandable that you would avoid such interactions.”

“Like an alcoholic to a keg.”

“An interesting choice of phrasing. Alcoholic implies that there was a time you indulged and delighted in your social vices.”

“Ah. Maybe not then. I’ve never enjoyed being around other people. Ever.” It’s true. Even before the bite, Will kept to himself. It’s mostly out of necessity now, but there is no mistaking the dull, bitter emptiness that feels like a black hole in Will’s stomach.

Will has never been a people person, but sometimes he wishes he was something to *somebody.*

“Was it the fear of offending that caused you to accept my invitation tonight?” Hannibal asks, unaffronted.

“Would that bother you?” Will gazes up at him under his eyelashes, unnerved by the question for some reason.

Hannibal says nothing in return, he simply smirks. *Evidently not. Why is that?*

More to the point, Will’s personal reasons for coming here tonight are beginning to blur and unravel around the edges. He came to test a theory, sure, but now that he’s here, in the Ripper’s domain while the monster is seemingly unaware of his infiltration, things aren’t so clear. Admittedly, *horifically,* Will is actually having a nice time. The food is delicious and has satisfied his Rougarou, and his gracious, enigmatic host is actually much better company than Will initially thought he would be.

And then there’s the flirting. Hannibal Lecter is not shy about it either, and against everything that Will knows, it feels… *good.*

“I said yes because I was hungry. And I know how talented in the kitchen you are. I don’t do things just to make other people happy.” Will settles on, feeling oddly starstruck by the man in front of him.

A dark, almost salacious look passes through Hannibal’s eyes, and for a second, all they do is look at one another. Will’s heart starts pounding so loud that he wonders if Hannibal can hear it.

“Then, I shall count myself lucky.” Hannibal finally murmurs, his voice bringing a thunderstorm of butterflies to Will’s gut. *Shit, he’s actually really gorgeous.* “Your presence is always welcome. I would be happy to have you for dinner any time, Will.”

Yeah, I bet you would.

The tension quickly becomes too much, and Will has to look away so that Hannibal can’t see his flushed cheeks. Flirtation is dangerous. This is becoming treacherous *very* quickly.

As they fall back into more casual conversation, Will quickly forms a plan. He needs to understand this man, and the only way to do it is to watch from afar.

The next time you leave this house to take a life, Dr. Lecter, Will thinks to himself. *I’ll be watching you from the woods.*

Deep within, the Rougarou readies himself for the hunt.

Chapter End Notes

Comments feed Will's dogs <3

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Hello all!
I'm going out of town for a few days so I won't be able to write and I'm so happy I got this out before I left! Things are developing now and I hope you guys like this!

May 2005

Will feels himself waking slowly. The stupid heart monitor is beeping incessantly in his ear, and while he appreciates the reminder that he's alive, he wishes it wasn't so fucking *loud.* After everything that has happened today, all he wants is a little peace and quiet. The Rougarou isn't even being quiet; he's still growling and bristling at the pain radiating down his back and right arm, making Will clench his teeth to keep it swallowed down, just as he did through the blaring sirens, the lights, the blood pouring onto the pavement and the paramedics in his face.

He doesn't blame Jason Greene for what he did. Will can't even blame himself for not pulling the trigger, even to wound instead of kill. Greene fought hard, but his feral attack came from a place of fear instead of rage, and it was enough to make Will hesitate. He couldn't do it. Getting stabbed in the shoulder was the price he paid for his hesitance and Will can take that.

Still fucking hurts.

Slowly, he opens his eyes and squints against the blur. There is someone else here too, an indistinct dark mass in a chair to his left.

His visitor chuckles. "Hey, sleeping beauty."

"Hi, Jules." He's actually relieved that it's her. Cecile had stuck around for quite a while and Will really isn't prepared to talk to her again so soon. She means well, but her maternal instincts are too much for him sometimes.

The blur finally subsides. Julianna is curled up in the rickety hospital chair with her knees propped up against the arm. Her caramel hair is covered by the hood of her grey sweatshirt and there's a pair of dark sunglasses hooked to the front. She looks relaxed enough on the outside, but it's clear that she's uncomfortable here. Her eyes continue to dart over to the door almost subconsciously. Her Rougarou's hypervigilance is unparalleled, though Will is still too sluggish to decipher if it's the smell of blood that's setting her off, or if it's the police presence surrounding them.

They are, after all, both killers of sorts.

Will frowns, confused by her presence. “Why are you…”

Jules shrugs self-consciously. “Heard it on the news. I ran into your Sergeant outside. She let me in.” She explains, the relief in her voice a little startling.

“You didn’t have to…”

“Yeah, I did.” She counters stubbornly as if offended that he would suggest it.

It’s weird. He and Jules know the worst about each other, but until today, he had never really considered her a friend. Yet, here she is, looking worried and relieved to see that he’s okay. It’s nice though, if not unexpected and strange. Unfamiliar.

And a little mortifying, if only because he looks like a literal hot mess at the moment, probably still covered in…

Oh, fuck.

Will’s heart skips a beat and the monitor reflects it. His body suddenly feels tight with panic. “They took blood.” He gasps, glancing wildly over at Jules. “My blood.”

“Don’t worry about that. They won’t see the mutation.” She assures him with a wave of her hand. He must not look convinced though, because she smiles tightly. “Actually, they’ll probably tell you you need to eat more red meat. The irony.”

“How do you know?”

“G and I got in a car accident a few years back and I got stuck in here overnight. Thought the men in black were gonna show up and haul me away to Area 51. You’re safe. Cross my heart.” She replies, actually going through the motions with her fingers.

Relief makes him go lightheaded, and Will has to collapse back on the pillow in a huff. The last thing he needs is to become a science experiment. Regardless if it gave him answers about the curse or not, they would never let Will go if they captured him. They would dissect him over and over again until there was nothing left.

Almost two years now without answers. It seems like a lifetime of waiting, even though Jules just passed seven years herself. *God,* the idea makes him feel sick. He feels no closer to understanding than he did when he got the bite. That string of hopelessness makes Will’s skin itch with the urge to either tear his flesh apart or run until he can’t feel it anymore.

Lately, he’s been thinking about running. Not completely going feral and living off of the land as a wolf like the teenage Rougarou he met a few months ago, but just… *getting out.* Leaving this place where nothing makes sense and keeps his future looking bleak and bloody.

And, now with a fucked up shoulder (and whatever holes the Captain of NOPD decides to rip into Will for the fuck-up today), maybe he’s found his reason.

“I can’t stay here.” Will blurts. Julianna looks at him strangely, so he continues; “In Louisiana, I mean. I think uh… I think it’s time for me to move on.” Saying it aloud gives it foundation. It gives it an impact. Now he has no choice.

Jules’ eyes widen in understanding, but she doesn’t exactly look shocked. Her eyebrow quirks up just a fraction. “Trying to outrun the curse?”

Will snorts. “Not exactly. I just… I used to love it here. It feels stained now. I’ve been searching for answers, and I’m not going to find them. My best bet is going somewhere else and starting over. Learn to live with myself.”

“Where will you go?”

“Virginia. I want to work for the FBI as a profiler.” It may not be the best idea, but it’s one he’s been considering for a while. He has the mind for it.

Jules nods, again not surprised by his answer, and a sad little smile pulls at her lips. “If that’s what you want. I’ll admit, I’m going to miss having you around. Grant was just getting used to you too.”

Will laughs, feeling lighter than he has all day. Having her support is pretty nice. It feels nice, having a friend.

“I know what you’re going through. Me better than anyone.” She continues, all joking gone and replaced by sincerity. “You’re braver than me, in the end. I hope that leaving helps you.”

“So do I.”

November 2013

Will goes rigid in the doorway the moment he sees her; flame-colored hair, a hideous leopard print skirt, and a blue garment that is about as stylish as a sandwich board sign over top.

“He catches insane men because he can think like them.”

Sickly sweet voice that makes your fucking *skin crawl.*

Freddie Lounds glances over her shoulder at him and behind her, Abigail Hobbs is taking in the scene with a frightened look.

“...because he *is* insane.”

Will has to force himself to breathe. The Rougarou has already caught Freddie fucking Lounds in his sights and it takes everything Will has to keep from sinking his teeth into her slender little neck and taking her tongue for dessert. He sneers, hateful and threatening all at once. “Would you excuse us, please?” He’s actually impressed with how controlled his voice sounds.

His wolf is not so calm.

He paces into the room just to expel some of the furious energy that is radiating through his body and introduces himself in the same careful, deadpan tone in an attempt to salvage this meeting.

Whatever chances Will had at a decent first impression with Abigail Hobbs seems to have vaporized before he could even try. Will looks down at the girl in the bed, the one he sat by just three days ago and told a bedtime story to, the one whose bloody handprint still stains a shirt in the back of his closet, and he can tell that Freddie Lounds has already sunk roots in her mind. Abigail looks afraid.

And Freddie just keeps making it worse.

“By ‘Special Agent’ he means ‘Not Really An Agent’. He couldn’t get past the screening tests.” A serpent-like smile, then: “Too unstable.”

A red veil is placed over Will’s eyes when he stares directly into her eyes, the soft rumble of a snarl rattling his ribcage. The monster under his skin is suddenly *starving.* The call of *fleshbloodbonemeatRIPBITE**TEAR—***

Stop.

Remember. Remember who you are.

You’re stronger than this.

“I really must insist you leave the room.” Hannibal quips behind him, polite but bristling at Freddie’s audacity.

The Rougarou snarls, but Will’s blood no longer feels like it’s boiling. His rage has settled to a simmer, held down only by his gratitude in Hannibal’s efforts in removing her. Maybe he sensed the danger, maybe not, but Will is grateful. He snatches Freddie’s shitty business card right out of her hand and slips it into his jacket pocket without a second thought.

Maybe he’ll need it if he ever decides he’d like to taste snake.

Once the door closes, Will doesn’t really know what to do. Abigail Hobbs watches him, distrustful and scared, but most of all, she looks angry. It makes a certain amount of sense, but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurt a little.

Without much else to do (and because the stillness of the room is becoming dense and oppressive), Will takes off his glasses just to move his hands and releases the breath he’s been holding for ages. “Abigail,” He gestures toward Hannibal, who steps forward. “This is Dr. Lecter.”

Her bright blue eyes are pinched as they dart between the men at her feet, concentrated on their faces with a sharp, knowing eye. *Recognition.*

“Do you remember us?”

“I remember you.” She answers, strong, but slightly watery and quiet. “You killed my Dad.”

It feels like a punch to the gut, but underneath, a much more horrifying thought comes to mind.

I almost did worse than that.

As if sensing the struggle, Hannibal steps in a second time, saving Will from digging himself a deeper hole.

“You’ve been in bed for days, Abigail. How about a walk?”

“There’s no such thing as getting used to what you experienced. Still bothers me a lot.” Will lowers himself onto the seat beside Abigail slowly. He keeps distance between them, not wanting to spook or crowd her, but nonetheless, he wants her to know that he’s there and he understands. “I worry about nightmares too.”

Abigail turns to look at him just as he turns to look at her, and hidden behind the walls she’s built, there is a hint of vulnerability. She still has a chain on the door, but she’s peeking through the crack, curious to see what kind of person he really is. *Withholding information to gain information.*

This girl has seen more horror in her seventeen years than most see in a lifetime.

Will recognizes that trepidation in her eyes; the way she’s hoping for someone to understand her, while also thinking of herself as something vile. Something… *bad.* Something that *terrifies* her.

“So killing somebody, even if you have to do it…” She utters cautiously. “It feels that bad?”

If Will was even the tiniest bit more human, he may have missed it. He wouldn’t have heard the loaded question, Abigail Hobbs testing the waters.

If he were any more human, he would lie. He would say that it’s the ugliest thing in the world, disguising the truth just to appear *normal,* eager to drop whatever suspicions Freddie may have planted in Abigail’s mind about him.

But Will is not human. He is a monster wearing a man’s skin, and if these last ten years have taught him anything, it’s how to spot another like him. Jack’s suspicions were correct, as were Hannibal’s and to an extent, Will’s own. There is no doubt in his mind now that Abigail Hobbs was involved with her father’s crimes, but, as he suspected, she was doing what she had to do to survive.

Will Graham looks at Abigail Hobbs and sees himself.

And both of them deserve a little honesty.

“It can.” He tells her, delicate and kind. “But, knowing that you survived often feels… better.”

Abigail blinks back at him, confused at first, but then understanding blossoms over her face, and for the first time since they’ve been together, Abigail seems to relax. She’s still coiled tight, holding her nightmares and secrets close to her heart as a traumatized young girl would. She doesn’t suspect that Will knows anything, that much is clear, but she sees him as a potential ally, and that is good enough.

Will tries to ignore the way that Hannibal’s heated gaze is burning a hole into the side of his head. The look feels like *pride.*

Abigail Hobbs looks between them with fierce determination hiding pain, and says: “I wanna go home.”

August 2005

The day the acceptance letter came, Will could hardly believe it. He stared at it in his hands after weeks of agonizing and felt weightless for the first time in years. Even his monster was pleased.

(Of course, he promptly panicked about the monster for nearly an hour before he convinced himself to get off the kitchen floor, get over himself, and start looking into storage places for the rest of the shit he could never fit in the Acadamy dorms, whilst still panicking about how he *and* the Rougarou are going to fit in such a small place. Thank *God* he has no roommate this year. Plenty of time to figure that out.)

Nevertheless, here he is, packing the rest of his shit in the back of his Volvo with Julianna and (shockingly) Grant. Jules is sad, even though she’s trying very hard to hide it. She’s talkative, which is a rarity; generally, she’s as quiet as Will is when they’re not having one of their discussions, so it’s rather obvious to him.

Will is going to miss her. She’s been a great anchor to his human life, but if he’s honest, Jules is just a good friend. She had to go through the bite and the journey after on her own, and it’s that bravery that makes Will feel brave enough to make this move. He doesn’t really know how to tell her that.

He tries to think about it while he loads the last of the boxes into the trunk, but by the time he’s squished the last of the bags on top and Grant closes the hood, he still hasn’t thought of anything.

Grant wipes his hands off on his dirty jeans and holds it out for Will to shake. He even manages to smile, even if it looks tight around the edges. “Take care of yourself, kid. Be good and all that.” He says, and *hell,* he actually sounds like he means it.

A little surprised, Will returns the handshake and nods in appreciation. “Thanks, Grant.”

After giving Will a nod back, Grant actually surprises him a second time by making an excuse of getting the AC started in their car and steps aside to allow his sister her goodbye in peace.

Julianna steps up in front of him with her arms crossed and a sad little smile on her face. Will manages to hold her eyes as he says: “Thank you, Jules. For everything you’ve done for me. I… I don’t think I would have survived these last few months without you. I hope one day I can repay you for it.”

She rolls her eyes, but he can see the way the hazel mists over, and it makes a lump rise in Will’s throat. “Oh, never mind that, come here.” Jules scolds him as she wraps her arms around his neck and pulls him into a tight hug that he gladly returns.

He can’t remember the last time he was hugged.

His friend rubs her hands up his back and turns her head to whisper into his ear. “If you’re ever in the neighborhood again, just howl.”

“I will.” He promises through his laughter. He will be back to see her. “Goodbye, Jules.”

“Goodbye, Will Graham.” She murmurs. “I hope you find happiness wherever you go. And do me a favor when you get there.”

“Sure.”

Jules squeezes him just a little tighter. “Have *fun.”*

And while Will is driving away, long down the road after waving goodbye to his friend, he’s renewed with a sense of blooming hope. It doesn’t make any sense, not even to his wolf, but Will Graham has one clear thought as he barrels down the expressway with the windows down, the radio blaring Pearl Jam while the summer sun brings a smile to his face:

Something incredible is going to happen.

November 2013

Taking Abigail home goes about as well as Will’s camping trip ten years ago. Between Alana’s constant hovering and Cassie Boyle’s brother showing up, it’s already been a hell of a trip.

The only upside is that Abigail seems to be warming up to him. Their first bullshit encounter, thanks to Freddie Lounds, may have been initially soured, but Will made the right call with his words in the hospital. Abigail Hobbs is still wary of anyone and everyone, as she should be, but she isn’t overly cautious with him as she may have been had he lied to her.

The moment the cabin door opens, Will’s hackles raise and the Rougarou echoes with a warning growl. His senses may be duller in human form, but there is nothing like the scent of fresh blood to awaken his monster.

These walls are stained with death, but something new *has come. Something is wrong.*

Will can't say any of that out loud, so he keeps himself visibly calm (and characteristically agitated) for their sake, but he inches closer to Hannibal and keeps Alana and Abigail in his sights, should the need to protect them arise.

Like when a droplet of blood falls from the ceiling right onto Abigail's forehead.

"All of you stay here." Will orders, keeping his eyes fixed on the stain. His monster is ready for a hunt.

The stairs creak under his weight like the ones leading up to Lisette's store back in New Orleans, and he imagines a broken line of red brick dust intercepting the top of the stairs. If the line is broken, it can be crossed, and if it's crossed…

You end up mounted and bled on the rack of bone protruding from the wall.

Will stares at Marissa Shurr's body, feeling guilt settle into his blood, giving it the consistency of cough syrup. He did not kill her, but the savagery of Garrett Jacob Hobbs' essence still fresh in his brain while he stands in what is arguably the Shrike's Holy ground, Will physically feels the strain in his muscles like he had hauled her onto the antlers himself. Underneath Will's skin, the Rougarou blood feels like liquid voltage; sparking and burning and *aching* in his teeth with bloodlust while the human's feels cold with fear and fascination.

This work is familiar.

The hairs on the back of Will's neck stand upright as he hears frantic footsteps on the stairs and Alana's sharp voice crying out Abigail's name.

The monster inside of him, while cruel and murderous, still holds that atavistic, primal instinct to protect his own with everything he has. The human is still frozen, shocked, and scared, but the Rougarou forces Will's body to move. He drops Marissa's head and rushes to the stairs just as Abigail lets out a series of terrified screams. He catches her around the middle and she doesn't fight him, she just screams for her friend while he pulls her away.

He stares over her shoulder, past Alana who is halfway up already, over to Hannibal Lecter who stands nonchalantly at the bottom of the steps with a mask of concern that only Will could see through the cracks of.

Two monsters meet eyes.

Will looks and sees bone sliced right through Marissa Shurr's body, as well as the hands that put her there. He sees his own face mirrored in her wide, petrified blue eyes, calm and passive as can be, then it slowly melts into sharp angular features with eyes the color of blood and amber.

You are not what you think you are. You are the ignition for a much brighter force. Necessary collateral in this story of ours. As they say, you must rob Paul to pay Peter.

I know what you are made of.

I know what that enraged older brother is made of.

*I want to know what **she** is made of.*

The reflection quirks a smile.

The man, *the mask,* continues to stare with clinical, well-arranged apprehension and alarm, and once again, Will Graham knows that he will protect this monster too. This is another secret for the Rougarou to keep.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

> Hi everyone! Okay, so I'm not as happy with this as I was hoping, but I think I did okay. I know this seems like a lot of filler too, but I promise it isn't. This is all important. Will is going to get his shit together soon, I promise! Either way, I hope you guys enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will wasn't surprised when Jack told him about Nick Boyle; he was angry. The good Doctor's story of the attack seemed plausible and possibly even likely, if both Hannibal and Will didn't already know who *really* killed Marissa Shurr. Of course, Nicholas went running to the one person who may be able to listen, the one person who he may be able to make an ally out of.

Missing, though? Not a chance.

One look at Lecter and Abigail's bloody fingernails and Will knew the truth. Nick Boyle was absolutely dead, and by Abigail's hand. Will doesn't know how it happened, as there is no evidence to suggest it, but Will doesn't need it.

Will's feelings toward this whole mess are so conflicted and confusing now, thanks to Hannibal fucking Lecter. His morals and understanding are not even just fighting anymore; it's a full-on turf war inside his head and each side is fighting dirty in a clash of bone and blade. He's furious with Hannibal for killing an innocent teenager just for an experiment, for allowing a traumatized, angry young man to be killed for the same purpose, just as he's angry with Abigail for taking his life to begin with. He's angry that they're both lying to him.

However… he can't blame Abigail. Not really. Maybe it wasn't self-defense, maybe it was in her eyes. One thing is absolutely certain though; Will is glad she killed him if it meant that Abigail is alive, and he's grateful to Hannibal for whatever he did to protect her. Jack would never let her go if he knew the truth, just like the world would never forgive Will Graham for the lives he takes for survival.

Everything is so *fucking* confusing.

He needs to confront Hannibal. Above all else, he needs to confront him, tell him he knows, and… well. He doesn't really know what to do after that.

That is, after all, why he's here. Why he's been here nearly every night.

The neighborhood Hannibal lives in does not offer much in terms of protection from the wandering eye, especially when Will is in this form, but in the back of Hannibal's house rests a patch of trees and thick bushes that Will can crawl under and remain concealed after dark as

long as he's quiet and still. It has a clear view of Hannibal's living room from his little hiding spot, which isn't far from the kitchen and dining room, even if he can't see them.

He just hopes Hannibal doesn't look out and see his eyes glowing through the branches. Not that Hannibal would think a wolf in his back garden is much of a threat to his lifestyle as it would be physically, but Will would rather not take the chance.

Will tilts his nose toward the air and inhales deeply. Hannibal cooked something earlier that made his mouth water (and, embarrassingly, his tail thump against the cold ground) and that scent still lingers in the air. Will wonders who the meal was made from. He wonders if it was Nick Boyle.

A shadow passes by the window, catching the wolf's attention, and when Will looks, he sees Hannibal Lecter dressed in his long overcoat with his car keys in hand. Based on the stars and his internal clock, it's nearly midnight.

Where are you going?

Hannibal disappears from Will's sight and he shifts his ears toward the garage. He hears the Bentley purr to life and the mechanical sound of the door lifting from the ground. Internally, Will grins.

Still careful of wandering eyes, Will crawls out from the bush and shakes the dirt and dead leaves from his fur, then takes off into the night after Hannibal's car.

There isn't much that Will Graham enjoys about his curse, but he *does* love this. The running. The freedom. The feeling of cold air bouncing off of his warm, thick, brown coat and the feeling of the Earth pounding beneath his massive paws. He's faster than anything else alive, faster than any car or animal, and when he runs like this, he feels alive.

Chasing a man like Hannibal Lecter also makes him feel alive, even if he isn't sure if it's the thrill of the hunt or the thrill of Hannibal himself.

They go for several miles, way outside the city limits to a small, secluded cabin where a sea of trees hide Will's hulking form. Hannibal parks outside and meanders up the short gravel driveway. The second he opens the door, Will smells blood and fear.

Someone else is inside.

Will stalks the perimeter of the cabin until he finds a basement window that is hidden by the dead shrubs surrounding the place. The scent of viscera is incredibly strong now, so Will takes a chance and looks inside.

It looks like a makeshift, perverted hospital room with the lighting and the monitors, but what really has Will stumbling is the shiny, silver operating table toward the side and the patient atop it. It's a man about Will's age with greasy, bloody, blonde hair. He isn't moving but Will can hear the slowed beating of his heart. He's been sedated, strapped down but not gagged, and possibly has been there for days.

Will hears the opening of the basement door, and when he shifts his gaze toward the noise, he sees Hannibal descending the stairs wearing… *the fuck is he wearing?* His expensive overcoat has been shed and replaced by a shiny plastic suit, like a crime scene cleaner's outfit. It's fitted perfectly, obviously something Hannibal has used several times and probably has multiple of.

You have a murder suit. Of course, you have a murder suit.

Hannibal flicks on the lights and approaches the man on the table. There's a needle stuck in his neck that Hannibal removes, presumably to allow his victim to wake up. Hannibal bustles around the space, pulling out scalpels and other tools and readying them on a metal Doctor's tray.

He's going to take organs, Will knows this, but it doesn't change the fact that he is hooked by curiosity.

Within minutes, the patient begins to stir and he immediately goes into a panic at the scene around him. He can't move beyond the jerky trembles, his body weighed down by the drugs in his system.

Hannibal flicks his head around to face his captive with a polite smile. "Ah, Mr. Henderson, welcome back." He says like he's greeting a patient.

The man zeros in on him with manic, wild eyes and instantly begins thrashing against his restraints.

"No, none of that, if you please. You are conscious, but the paralytic I administered will make it impossible for you to move. Best stay where you are."

"Wh… why?" The man on the table manages to grit out.

"Why you?" Hannibal clarifies, his eyebrow-raising.

The man whimpers in response.

Will watches, transfixed, as Hannibal gracefully strides up to the operating table and adjusts the light above the man's head. "To be perfectly frank, Mr. Henderson, it is entirely your own fault." He states, his voice dripping with disapproval. He launches into a rather unsavory tale of Henderson's disposition at the gas station he works at, and Will's senses are going heywire with every velvety word that slips from Hannibal's mouth.

He's falling. Will is tumbling deep into the Ripper's thoughts while wearing the fur and flesh of an impossible beast of his own. He hears his own voice speaking the words in tandem, and the Rougarou answers with a steady growl that could almost be a purr. Will's muscles tremble with the weight of the Ripper on his back, but as much as he wants to run and hide, his monster wants to be closer.

He can't know you're here.

Will digs his claws into the Earth to force himself to stay still.

A glint of silver catches Will's eye. There's a scalpel cradled in Hannibal's right hand, poised to cut in a steady line through the man's chest. His victim squirms and whimpers in terror as the blade draws nearer. The scent of his fear spikes, sparking along the air and making the Rougarou's mouth water.

"I'm afraid this will be rather painful, Mr. Henderson, but I advise you to keep still." Hannibal explains, calm as can be.

In response, the man spits out a rather unsavory slur on Hannibal's behalf, which only makes the Ripper's smile grow.

Will can't look away from him, not even when Hannibal seems to make a split–second decision and puts the blade down, picking up what looks to be a fucking *bone saw* instead. "In the world of psychiatry," Hannibal drawls in a nearly pleasant way. "There is an unfortunately common link between low intelligence and prejudice. You readily lack the desire to experience complexity, keeping yourself so tethered to the conservative viewpoints of your father and grandfather. If only you thought to learn. Knowledge is such a gift. However," A sinister little smirk pulls at his lips. "I am quite certain I will find a much better use for your brain."

The Rougarou's massive teeth itch.

Hannibal holds the saw's blade to the man's forehead and clicks it to life. A terrible, mechanical sound fills the small room and assaults Will's eardrums, pounding and thrashing on the inside of his skull. Blood, bright red and pungent, drips from the man's head and falls in droplets down his hairline.

There are specks of it on Hannibal's face. It matches his eyes.

Deep, ravenous hunger floods the Rougarou's veins, fighting for dominance over the Ripper's hold on his rational thoughts that scream at Will to run before his hunger takes him over completely.

Get up. Get out of here. Hannibal can't know that you're here, he can't know that you're watching.

You have to get away before you interfere.

Before you make a mistake and hurt him.

*Do **not** hurt him.*

Will forces himself up as the saw continues to pry through the pig's skull like butter and takes off back the way he came. Faster and faster he pushes his powerful legs to carry him like a bullet away from the scent of blood and *Hannibal.*

Hannibal is a monster, and he's not like Will at all. He kills because he can, because he enjoys it, and he enjoys dishing out his punishments as he sees fit. Pigs, not victims. Still food, but not out of necessity. Hannibal Lecter is the nightmare coiled beneath his pillow.

And Will just protected him. *Again.*

All because the Rougarou couldn't stomach the idea of hurting him.

Will's monster has chosen a side, and Will is trapped against the fence, unable to climb over or run in the other direction.

He can still the blood a mile out as if he had cut the pig open and spilled his brains himself. It clings to his fur, saturates the inside of his powerful nose, and makes his paws tremble each time they hit the cold earth. Will isn't even sure he's going in the right direction anymore; he just needs to put as much distance between this place, that *monster,* and his own beast as soon as possible.

That is, until a gust of wind whistles past Will's ears, and a chill that has nothing to do with the cold travels down the wolf's spine.

He stops. Inhales.

Just ahead of him is an overpass, and somewhere nearby, most likely nestled underneath, is the sound of a beating, living heart.

The Rougarou's mouth waters, his teeth throbbing with the urge to *devour.*

Will doesn't fight it. He knows what happens if he resists. He's still so deep in the Ripper's—*Hannibal's*— psyche that his fragile human morality has melted away, and without so much as a second thought, Will goes to hunt.

His nose leads him to the tunnel beneath the overpass where a man is nestled against the wall out of sight. It's a drug dealer. He has a scale resting on his thigh, a medium-sized bag of white powder on the cement surrounded by smaller distribution bags, some of which are filled. He's humming to himself while he fills another baggie, completely unaware that just beyond the trees mere feet from him, Will is waiting for him.

He closes his eyes, allows the hunger to sink deep beyond veins and arteries and bone. The man continues rationing out his powder, still humming, still blissfully ignorant.

The Rougarou's eyes snap open, fixed on the man through the trees.

Kill.

Eat.

EAT.

The branches snap between his paws when Will launches himself forward, out into the open, and directly in his meal's path.

The dealer jumps about a foot in the air when the large wolf lands just feet from his outstretched leg, crying out in surprise and terror.

"Holy fuck!" He chokes out as he scrambles to his feet, abandons his drugs, and tries to make a break for it.

The Rougarou grins. He loves when they run.

Will takes off after the man, catching up after a few seconds and sinking his sharp teeth into the man's ankle. The dealer collapses onto his stomach with a hard *thud,* already attempting to claw at the Earth to crawl away. He lands a solid kick to the side of Will's face but the wolf's teeth do not relent; they clench tighter, snapping his ankle bone between his strong jaw.

He will not live long enough for the curse to take hold.

Will jerks his head to the right, yanking the man back and flipping him over onto his back. The man's grey eyes are blown wide, frantic, and bloodshot and his fear smells of acid that makes the Rougarou's powerful nose burn. Will looks him in the eye, pulls his lips back over his large teeth that drip with saliva. He's *so, so hungry.*

The dealer tries to twist away. *"Help! Somebody help me!"* He screams at the top of his lungs.

Too bad no one can hear.

The Rougarou sinks his teeth into the man's arm to keep him pinned, then goes directly for the throat.

Within minutes, the dealer is nothing more than a shredded pile of meat scraps. The wolf devours organs, muscles, and flesh, then snaps bones and drinks the marrow for dessert.

The monster wonders if Hannibal would be proud.

By the time Will finally makes it home, it's nearly three in the morning. His meal had been a messy one this time, nothing clean about it, so he took a brief detour to a nearby river to clean the blood and viscera from his fur. The natural insulation from the cold keeps him warm, even when he peeled out of the water and began running toward Wolf Trap while still wet. The bath could be considered unnecessary; even if police found the remains, there would be no reason for them to suspect it was murder instead of an animal attack, nor would they automatically assume Will, but he's smart enough to *not* track evidence into his home.

Whenever he goes hunting, WIll still locks his home but keeps a single house key under a stone near the porch. Luckily he lives in the middle of nowhere, so there's no one out there to see a very naked, very human Will stumble his way up the porch steps with his rogue key.

The dogs are happy to see him as always, and they greet him with cheerful yips and wet tongues.

"Alright, alright, I see you. I hear you." He tells them with a grin. "Let me clean up first."

His pack whines, but reluctantly allows Will to pass by them and retreat to the bathroom to take a real shower.

Will always spends longer in the shower after a hunt than his normal in–and–out routine. He lives his life to be practical, to be thorough, and attentive without spending too much time standing still. Perks of the job, he supposes, constantly living like he's on call and ready to go where he's asked.

But, after a hunt? Not a chance. Will will spend nearly an hour under the spray, sometimes longer, until his water heater begins to give up the fight and the water starts to chill. During the first few years of Will's curse, the longest, hottest shower he could take was the only way he could feel like a human again. It was the only way Will could scrub the Rougarou from his skin, could wash his sins down the drain. It was the only way he could live with himself. The only way he could feel *clean.*

This time, however, his hour–long shower is not spent in a fit of self–loathing because he's too stuck on Hannibal Lecter.

Will thought that once he knew the truth about Hannibal, it would be easier to make a decision. He assumed that seeing the Ripper in action would spur him to run to Jack as soon as possible. Even if Hannibal meticulously cleaned his workspace, there would certainly be enough evidence in sight for an arrest and more than enough for a conviction if they tested the food in Hannibal's fridge.

To his absolute fucking dismay, however, Will doesn't want to go to Jack. He doesn't want anyone else to know what he knows, and he doesn't fucking understand.

But he wants to.

That's why, after his shower, Will dresses comfortably, sees to his dogs, and begins to pace around the first floor, compiling a list of everything he knows.

So far, Hannibal Lecter has done things to satisfy the itch of curiosity. He left Will a gift in Hibbing, Minnesota, served the lungs he ripped from her body over breakfast. Perhaps he was really sizing Will up, trying to see how broken he supposedly was, but the conversation that followed was challenging in a different way. It was *stimulating.* Hannibal was interested then.

Then, Hannibal makes a sneaky phone call to the Hobbs' residence, warning Garrett Jacob Hobbs and allowing *persuading* him to go out with a bang, so to speak. They save Abigail Hobbs' life, even though Hannibal endangered her to begin with.

Why?

It was more than just keeping up appearances, more than saving a teenager's life because he had to as a Doctor at an active crime scene. Hannibal couldn't be too curious about her own motives yet, as nothing about Abigail had come out yet. So then, once again, *why?*

Unless it had nothing to do with Abigail Hobbs at all, and it had everything to do with something else. Or some *one* else.

And Hannibal certainly didn't save Abigail Hobbs for her father, as he was lying dead just feet from them.

You saved her for me then.

Moving on, he helps pave a way for Abigail to see Will as more than the man who killed her Dad, simply by including Will when they spoke of how they could help her. That must have been when his curiosity about Abigail Hobbs must have grown in spades, leading to the murder of Marissa Shurr (which Will is still upset about, thank you).

Will thinks hard about the way Hannibal and Abigail interacted in Minnesota before Nick Boyle showed up. She was wary of everyone in the room, but her brave face was unparalleled.

You be my dad, you be my mom, then a pointed, innocent look up at Hannibal Lecter, *and you be the man on the phone.*

Will startles when the dots finally connect. Abigail Hobbs knew. She recognized his voice in the hospital and Will never fucking noticed. She subtly called him on it in the house, making sure he knew that *she* knew…

Then Nick Boyle gets murdered (because what else could he be now besides dead?) and now she's forced to keep his secret as he's forced to keep hers. Will has no real idea what transpired between Abigail, Nicholas, or Dr. Lecter at the house that night, but he has no doubt now that Abigail Hobbs is in on at least a few of Hannibal's secrets.

Will strikes Hannibal's antics tonight from the record. It's an unrelated kill, separate from everything else. It had nothing to do with the Shrike or Copycat cases, nothing to do with the FBI, or even… even Will.

And then, like the dawn breaking over the tree line in his private corner of the world, Will Graham understands.

It's *him.* Will is what connects all of these little events together.

So, Hannibal Lecter *wants* something from Will, or he wants Will to do… something. Is he looking for a scapegoat? His continued participation in the FBI absolutely puts his darker activities at significant risk, so perhaps he's looking for a potential fall–man, should things go south?

But even as Will is thinking it, it doesn't seem quite correct. Like it's not enough. It's not the bigger picture, even if it seems like it is.

Almost like Hannibal is even conflicted about where he stands with Will. As if his motives are not fixed, but evolving as their relationship does the longer they stay in one another's orbit.

Will thinks back on their charged conversation in the hospital, then the impromptu dinner–date–that–was–definitely–not–a–date before Abigail woke up. Hannibal had served him long pig and they… *flirted?* That's what it was, wasn't it? It has to be. He thinks about the deer–in–the–headlights look on Hannibal's face when Will spoke French, the *roughness and beauty* debate… Hannibal Lecter was definitely flirting with him.

(And Will was flirting back, but that's beside the point.)

And whatever the fuck any of *that* means, Will has no fucking clue.

So, Hannibal is playing a long game with rules that only he is allowed to bend as he sees fit, and Will is at the center of it.

Is that why I can't kill you? Why I can't turn you in? Because I want to know what game we're playing and I want to play to win? Is my own curiosity keeping you safe?

Well, it can't be *all* that. Curiosity doesn't stop a bloodthirsty Rougarou in its tracks, has never stopped Will from killing someone when it was the only thing on his mind. It *definitely* doesn't explain why he was able to pull away from the smell of blood earlier tonight, simply because Hannibal's safety could be at risk.

It doesn't explain why Will *cares.*

Because he can't deny it now; Will Graham cares about what happens to Hannibal Lecter. The *why* is still very, very fuzzy.

He's still thinking about it hours later, throughout his two lectures and the drive home from Quantico. He thinks about everything on his little list from top to bottom, cataloging every microexpression, every clever quip about morality and murder, everything about Hannibal Lecter that he's learned over the last few weeks.

Everything comes to the same frustrating conclusion in the end—Hannibal is attached to Will in some regard, maybe he wants to fuck him, maybe he wants to gut him, maybe Hannibal is even vague on those details. Maybe he's as confused as Will is.

By the time the sun is setting, Will feels like he's going out of his mind. Without much else he can do, he takes out his phone and calls the one person he can think of to help him, as she has many, many times before.

Will settles himself down on the porch while the dogs play and mill about in the yard. The phone rings and rings until finally, there is a click and a large intake of breath on the other end.

"William Michael Graham, as I live and fuckin' breathe."

A large smile breaks out across Will's face. Her accent is so thick, even after all this time, and it reminds him of hot, humid Louisiana summers and the feel of the bayou. "Julianna Dupre, the voice of an angel." He counters, allowing his own accent to slip through.

Jules scoffs. *"What, you think you can call me for the first time in two years and butter me up? Shame on you, boy."*

Will laughs because he knows she's not really mad at him, but he's already beginning to feel guilty. It *has* been two years since they last spoke, and they've really only spoken a handful of times since Will moved from New Orleans.

It was nothing Jules did, but Will felt like he had relied on her so much after he was cursed and it wouldn't have been fair to go running to her the moment he started freaking himself out again. So, when he got through the academy and had built a life here while still searching for answers on his own, WIll would only call her if he had something to report, and after that… well, he just got used to doing it on his own. Time went on around him, as the months stretched on, if Will felt the urge to call Julianna, he just… didn't. It didn't seem right.

But now they haven't spoken in two years and Jules still has that same lighthearted, bitchy–sister tone she always has with him and her actual brother, and he can't understand why he was so stupid.

He's missed her. His friend.

"I'm sorry it's been so long. Been busy, y'know?" He half–heartedly explains. "How have you been?"

She makes a non–commital noise in her throat. *"Can't complain any more than usual. Bet you could though."* When Will doesn't speak, she adds: *"'Jack Crawford's crime gimp?'"*

His heart sinks to his stomach. He should have guessed that *Tattlecrime* had enough reach to get to his connections back home. "You read it then?"

"Sure did." Her tone is bitter, which makes Will feel a little better. At least Jules doesn't think any less of him now, considering what Freddie Lounds wrote. *"Good on you catching that Shrike guy, by the way."*

Like a rubberband being snapped against his skin, reality shifts back to normal. He called Jules for a reason.

Will clears his throat awkwardly and stutters out an unimpressive: "I nearly lost it at the crime scene."

"Super good on you, then."

"Jules…" Will takes a deep breath. "That's something I wanted to talk to you about."

His serious tone must hit home this time, because, over the line, he hears the sound of shuffling, then a door being closed. She's listening intently now. *"Okay,"* She says, her voice hard. *"Hit me."*

He can't tell her everything. He leaves the Ripper and Hannibal's link out of the conversation, but Will tells her everything he can. He edits things for legality, but more or less tells her the story of the Shrike case, how he met Hannibal and Abigail, and their

interactions as of late. He gives her a vague story about his actions last night, falsifying a story about a suspect, how hungry he grew, and how he ran to protect Hannibal from himself. Then, most importantly, Will explains how Hannibal and Abigail calmed the Rougarou mid–hunt at the Hobbs' house.

By the time he's done, Will is nearly out of breath and Jules hasn't said a word. He lets out a few gasps in an attempt to steady himself, waiting almost anxiously for her to reply.

Finally, Jules lets out an exasperated sigh. *"Well then."*

He could almost laugh if he wasn't so shell-shocked. "Has that… ever happened to you?"

"Only with my brother. If I felt like I needed to protect him I got a little more aggressive, but…"

"I still can't fully explain it, but they *calmed* me." He emphasizes. "Jules, it… it was like nothing I've ever felt before. I didn't want to kill anyone, I didn't want to hunt. I have *never* ignored my instincts like that. I wasn't even ignoring them, they just… *stopped.* Like I had a balloon in my chest and it slowly lost all its air."

"You have *ignored them before; when you got stabbed."*

Will pauses, considering. That is *technically* true, but he had simply been too shocked in the moment to do anything other than focus on not transforming and snapping in front of his fellow officers.

"You've never been a slave to your instincts, Will. Although…" Julianna sighs, and it sounds tired. *"I'll admit, I've never heard of anything like that."*

"It wasn't the same anyway." He says. "It just… I don't know. It was *different."*

She hums and Will can hear the cogs turning in her brain. *"Tell me about them."*

Will narrows his eyes, suddenly confused. He can't really see where this is going. "I can't really talk about Abigail for legal reasons,"

"Tell me about your Doctor, then. Why him?"

Your Doctor.

Will blushes bright red when he realizes what she's actually implying. Almost instinctively, Will goes to dispute her, but then he pauses. "Why?"

"I'm trying to help you *understand why that happened, meaning* I *need to understand, idiot,"* She says without any real bite. *"So go on. Tell me about this Hannibal guy. Why do* you *think you reacted that way around him? What is he to you?"*

"He's…"

God. What is Hannibal to him? They've dined together, flirted, and are sort of co-parenting a surrogate daughter together regardless of ulterior motives. Hannibal knows (almost) the worst about Will, and, as of last night, Will has witnessed Hannibal's *worst* firsthand.

And yet, and *yet*...

Will takes a deep breath and gives her the most honest answer he can, which still barely scrapes the surface of the truth. "He's *important."*

Jules hums again, considering this. *"Rougarou may be creatures, but wolves are pack oriented. Makes sense why you'd want to protect him."*

"He isn't… I mean, I barely know him. He's not really my psychiatrist, but I wouldn't really call him a friend either."

"But you want to protect him."

"Yes."

"And, he's 'important' *to you."*

"Yeah. He is."

"Will," Julianna breathes. "*Have you ever considered that you may just have a fucking* crush?"

All of the air rushes out of Will's lungs and he nearly drops the phone entirely.

She's got it all wrong. Completely backward. *Hannibal* was the one to flirt with him. *Hannibal* started this whole thing, and *yes,* Will got snared along the way, but it's not like *that.* It… it *can't* be.

Hannibal is a killer. A killer who kills because he wants to, not because he *has to.* Will got snared on his horns and is unable to pull away because while Hannibal is a monster, he's also fascinating, intoxicating, and absolutely *fucking* terrifying, but it's *not* a fucking crush.

It's just not.

"N-no." He stutters out, trying to sound defiant but ends up sounding like a petulant child. *"No* way."

"What, because he's a man?"

"No! Just…" *He's a serial killer.* "He's a shrink. And *human!"*

This time, Jules actually laughs. She tries to do it under her breath, but it doesn't exactly work and Will's pulse quickens. *"If that's your only stipulation, darlin', I think it's safe to assume that I'm right."*

Will groans and buries his obscenely red face into his free hand. There's no way she's right because if she knew what Will knew about Hannibal, she would have a completely different answer.

Then, as if sensing his unease, Jules adds: *"Look, man, Rougarou mate for life. If your wolf has his sights on this guy, you have two options; ignore it and walk away, or let yourself have it."*

"I think… ignoring it is best." He concedes.

"That's your choice." Her voice has changed again. If Will didn't know better, he would think she sounded almost… sad? Disappointed?

However, before he can call her on it, she cuts him off with another thought-provoking question: *"If you* didn't *ignore it, would you tell him the truth?"*

Will freezes in his spot. Tell Hannibal about the curse? He's sure Hannibal would be ecstatic if he knew that Will was a killer, but a literal monster? One born out of the impossible, one with fur and teeth and claws? Hannibal is, first and foremost, a psychiatrist, and he would try to have Will committed before he could even finish explaining. And if he *saw* the truth…

Would he run? Would Hannibal be frightened? Would he see the feral wolf that clings to Will's back and decide that he was no longer worth the game? Would Hannibal try to kill him then?

He could certainly try, but Will would kill him first. Even if he didn't want to, even if it hurt… the Rougarou would kill Hannibal before he got close enough.

And if Will has learned anything, it's that he doesn't want Hannibal dead.

He lets out a miserable sigh. "I don't know how I ever could."

"Yeah, that's the tricky part. Unfortunately, that is something I can't help you with."

There's an unspoken rule among the Rougarou that they do not reveal our existence to humans. Sometimes accidents happen, but being an urban legend comes with security because it's unlikely someone will believe you if you said you saw a werewolf. Jules made an exception for her brother, Grant, only because she had no choice. He came by during a full moon, having not seen her in months, and stumbled upon her right before she changed. No hiding it then, so Grant got the truth.

It turned out to be a good thing in the end. Grant accepted his sister's curse and has been a steady rock for her the whole time. He protects her as much as a human can, keeps her secret, and looks for answers as much as she does, but he does it because she's family.

Will doesn't have that luxury with Hannibal Lecter. If the Ripper views him as a threat, that's it.

So no. Will could never tell him.

Jules clears her throat, bringing his attention back to her. *"I know that this is very complicated, but am I able to make a request? Just one."*

"Sure."

"If you do *decide to pursue this, I want to meet him."* She states, surprising him. *"Gotta make sure he's good enough for you."*

Jules and Hannibal in the same room? Chatting it up at his fancy dining room table over long pig and wine? Shit, that would probably be a terrible idea, considering she could taste the difference too, but theoretically… Will tries to imagine Julianna, who is about as rough around the edges as he is, making herself at home in Hannibal's domain and what sort of conversations they would have if Hannibal was Will's… *whatever.*

Will scoffs at the idea. "You're not worried that *I* may not be good enough for *him?"*

"Nope." She replies matter-of-factly. *"Not at all."*

For a moment, Will can't find the words. There's a burning at the corners of his eyes that he tries to blink several times to clear away. Acceptance doesn't come easy to Will Graham, but Julianna offers it as easy as breathing.

Maybe Hannibal wouldn't be so different. He is, after all, a serial murderer and accepting of the unorthodox. Maybe, just *maybe...*

But that means that Will would have to accept Hannibal first, and that is something he doesn't know if he can do. It would break every single code he's ever set for himself. It would turn Will into an active participant instead of a reluctant villain in his own story. But again, to have someone so close and actually *see* Will for everything he is... would it be worth it?

(Yes.)

Chapter End Notes

Up next: The Lost Boys, mushroom tea, and a dinner invitation that actually gets accepted.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

> I know I know, I'm posting another one! I've been kind of obsessing over this fic and the world building for this fic and it gave me a lot of inspiration, so here I am again! I'm also sorry for not answering all of your wonderful comments, but please know that I read and cherish every single one and I'm grateful for the continued love and support. You're all incredible and I love you.
>
> Anyway! Please enjoy more Hannigram!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hello, Will. I hope this reaches you before Jack Crawford sends you galavanting after your Lost Boys. I relinquished Abigail from the hospital for the evening and was hoping that you would be available to join us for dinner at my home at six. I would very much like to have you there. Have a wonderful afternoon."

Will pulls the phone away from his ear, blinking down at it almost uncomprehendingly. Dinner with Abigail *and* Hannibal? It's… incredibly tempting.

The phone call from Hannibal came only an hour ago while they were still on the FBI jet to North Carolina to catch CJ Lincoln and the false mother. Will, who has been focused on these damn kids, missed it.

He wouldn't make it now, he realizes with no small amount of disappointment when he looks around the yard that's still swarmed with police and FBI agents. It's a five-hour drive, and there's no way that the jet would leave without the rest of them.

Unless…

Will looks around at the neighborhood carefully. It's suburban, private without a lot of trees for cover, but there are miles of forest and open plains just outside of the neighborhood that could conceal his large stature and fur. It would be much, *much* faster that way, and he would maybe even make it to dinner. If he's late, well… Hannibal won't say anything. He never does.

It's insanely risky. If he came into contact with anyone in Baltimore too soon, it could raise suspicions. But what the hell would they be able to say? *Oh, Will Graham can literally be in two places at once.* They'd probably assume he stole a plane or a car before they thought he was anything… *odd.*

And honestly? He wants to see them. After his conversation with Jules, Will almost canceled his therapy appointment that week. He couldn't fathom sitting in front of Hannibal while the

absurd idea that Will has a secret crush was still at the forefront of his thoughts. Then the Lost Boys started making their rounds and Will had no choice but to go to him if he wanted a chance at solving the case.

Julianna's theory sat at the base of Will's skull every night he sought Hannibal out, and naturally, Hannibal found a wound to stick his manicured fingernails into. *"Feeling paternal, Will?"*

That damn magnifying glass is still on his hardly–used kitchen table, still precariously wrapped with ribbon that he obsessively measured and cut. It glares at him every time he walks by and he glares right back.

He still wants to see her though. Both of them.

And, he is *starving.*

Mind made up, Will seeks out Jack, who has finished talking to Christopher O'Halloran and seems to be in a rather good mood. It gives him a little hope to see his boss smiling, so the moment Will has his attention, he expresses his plan to go home.

Jack narrows his eyes, confused. "What are talking about?"

"We caught 'em. You don't need me, and I have other obligations." It's a good enough answer.

"How you getting home?"

Shit. He should have come up with that response before he made his way over. Does he make up a story? No, lies are complex, truth is generally vague.

"I'll run." He says with a little shrug. It's meant to be a joke, of course, because if Jack actually ever saw Will run, he'd have a fucking heart attack, but it's sarcastic enough that he hopes Jack will just take the bait.

To his relief, Jack barks out a laugh, throwing back his head so quickly that it's a shock his neck doesn't break. "Yeah, sure. I saw you take the endurance test."

Will grits his teeth against the irritation that crawls up his throat. "Come on, Jack." He presses.

There's a long enough pause after that for a moment, Will actually thinks he may say no, but then Jack looks around at the progress of the investigation, gives Will a rough pat on the back and says: "You're lucky I'm in a generous mood tonight."

Pleased that Jack isn't bothering to ask more questions and Will says his goodbyes and makes a hasty but inconspicuous retreat away from wandering eyes or, God–fucking–forbid, the walking appetizer who thinks herself a journalist. Lucky for him, the police presence is mostly contained to the front, so when Will makes his way out back, he is able to slip away into the sparse forest without being seen. Will finds a place near the trees where the house is out of sight, then quickly strips completely.

After ten years, Will has grown accustomed to this particular inconvenience of needing to be in his other form while still parading around as a man. His solution is rather simple; he rolls his necessary clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks if they fit) into a tight bundle, then removes the laces from several of the eyelets to give him more line to work with and ties the bundle up. He ties the laces together, then once he changes, Will lays the laces over his teeth while his clothes and shoes hang on either side of his jaw.

It's a little gross; he knows where his shoes have been, and when he runs they tend to collide with his neck, so definitely not his favorite thing to do, but it's better than the alternative of ending up caught naked somewhere. Not even God himself could get Will out of the consequences of *that.*

He makes quick work of it, having done it so many times that it comes naturally. Will takes one last look around to make sure he's alone, then closes his eyes.

The change, too, has become as easy as breathing.

His heart pounds, the tremors begin, and everything begins to feel very warm, all while his senses spiral out of control and heighten. It feels like an adrenaline rush and a hangover–from–Hell all at once, and it only gets worse. The bones crack and reshape to fit a canine body which feels like an anvil has fallen right on top of him. It's agony, but the change is so fast that it's almost tolerable. The wolf's pelt splits Will's human skin clean open like a snake shedding its skin and then it spreads, covering him in coarse chestnut brown fur from ears to claws.

Will shakes out his fur to settle into his form and looks around. His senses are so much sharper in this form; he can hear Mr. and Mrs. O'Halloran giving their statements, Jack barking orders at some poor agent, even the reporters stuck on the other side of the police line in the front yard. There's a herd of deer near the state road picking softly through the underbrush.

There are some days when Will doesn't completely hate his curse.

In one motion, Will gathers up his little bundle of clothing and tears off like a blur through the field in the direction of Quantico.

Early afternoon has settled into early evening by the time Will finally makes it to the woods beyond the academy. The sun is low enough to keep his cover while he changes and redresses, then he shoves his hands in his pockets and strolls out of the woods like he's meant to be there. There are only a few people in his path; a few trainees and an agent smoking a cigarette on his break. None of them pay Will any mind.

He makes it to his car and out to the highway without incident, and, by some miracle, the traffic into Baltimore isn't horrendous. Will actually manages to make it to Hannibal's house in decent time.

However, it seems that he is not the only one. Alana's blue hybrid is parked out front which makes Will frown. Hannibal hadn't mentioned her in his voicemail. The bitter thought that Alana only allowed this dinner if she herself was also present claws at the inside of his skull and leaves an acidic taste in his mouth.

Still. If this is how it must be…

Will sighs and exits the car.

He hears the echo of the doorbell inside the house and he waits patiently with his hands inside his pockets.

When the door opens, Hannibal smiles at him like Will has brought him an offering instead of just his shabby, scrappy self. To Will's surprise, he returns the smile tenfold.

It's strange, really; after the night Will stalked him out of town and witnessed the Ripper… well, *rip,* he's still never felt more relaxed in another person's presence before. Not even Jules.

"Good evening, Will. Please, come in." Hannibal says, stepping to the side to allow him through. "I was worried you wouldn't make it."

"Wouldn't miss it." Will answers as he steps over the threshold. Alana's peacoat is on the hook by the door. "Alana's here?"

Hannibal notices the edge in his voice but is too polite to comment on it as they venture into the house. When Hannibal speaks again, his tone is very hushed. "Not by invitation. I should warn you, she is rather unhappy with me at the moment, and I do not believe she will be very happy to see you either."

The dots connect, and a surprised laugh bubbles up in Will's chest. "You didn't tell her."

"I was hoping to keep this a family secret, shall we say."

"Because Alana doesn't want either of us getting too close."

"Precisely."

Will tries to hide his snickering behind his fist, but Hannibal looks like he's trying not to laugh either and it's pretty endearing. Before they push the door open to the kitchen, Will lowers his voice to a gravelly whisper and croons: *"May God have mercy on your soul."*

Hannibal's eyes darken with mirth and mischief, but he holds his tongue.

He hadn't been kidding. Alana looked about two seconds from bursting before she saw Will's face, but the moment he comes into view at Hannibal's side, he hardly has to imagine the steam coming out of her ears.

Will holds up a hand just as she opens her mouth to unleash whatever wrath against him. "For the record, I did not know that *you* didn't know."

Alana eyes him distrustfully, but Hannibal comes to his rescue with a careful, placating, "Will is telling the truth."

"Oh, you're just a shining beacon of virtue tonight, Hannibal." She snaps, making Will's eyes go wide. He's never seen her so mad before. Alana turns back to him, the hostility dampened only slightly by her confusion. "How did you get here so fast? Weren't you in North Carolina?"

"Pixie dust." He blurts, then promptly feels himself flush at the rather morbid joke. "I uh… I don't recommend it."

Alana, who is used to Will being just a little odd, doesn't exactly smile, but he can tell her eyes that her residual anger is not for him. To confirm this, she turns back to glare at Hannibal some more, who has been staring at Will. "Where is she?" She demands.

"She's in the dining room."

Poor Abigail, Will thinks as Alana starts for the door.

"And Alana…" Hannibal calls after her. "You were right."

"Often am. Have to be more specific."

"She wasn't ready to leave the hospital," Hannibal says, sounding discouraged. Only Will can spot the lie. "She experienced a bit of anxiety so I gave her a sedative."

Alarm bells begin to go off in Will's head almost instantly. It's another lie, but Will isn't in on the game this time.

"A *sedative?"* Alana hisses just as Will's own voice echoes with: "What the hell did you give her?"

Hannibal chuckles at their mutual horror. "I only gave her half a Valium, but she may be a little hazy."

The scathing look Alana keeps throwing at him could burn a lesser man alive. She summons all of her self-control and doesn't exactly stomp away, but it's a near thing.

Well, Will thinks as he follows Hannibal's lead. *This ought to be good.*

Sure enough, Abigail is sat by herself at Hannibal's imposing dining table, in the place opposite where Will sat the last time he was here. She's staring unseeing at the empty plate in front of her, and the moment she looks up to see Alana, Will *knows* that that child hasn't taken Valium in her entire life. Whatever Hannibal gave her was absolutely *not* that.

"Hi, Doctor Bloom." Abigail murmurs.

"Hello, Abigail."

Abigail's eyes flicker slowly over Alana's shoulder and land on him. A nervous smile pulls at her lips. "Hi, Will."

"Hey." He approaches her carefully, knowing full–well that the others are observing him. Abigail follows him with her eyes, but their fragile bond seems to have remained intact. She continues to smile lazily at him, her big blue eyes wide as saucers and glazed over completely. *God, she's so high.* "You okay?"

"Hungry." She replies, then turns back to Alana. "Are you staying, Dr. Bloom? Hannibal made breakfast for dinner."

Will looks back at her, but she's glaring at Hannibal still. Almost triumphantly, Will realizes that there are only three place settings at the dinner table, and he sincerely hopes that it will remain that way.

It takes Alana a moment, but whatever silent conversation she is having with Hannibal seems to have been momentarily resolved, and she offers a tight but polite smile. "Not tonight." Then, to Hannibal, she icily says: "Someone will be taking her back to the hospital?"

"I'll take her, Alana. On my way back to Wolf Trap." He offers immediately, glancing over to Abigail for an okay, which she gives with a small nod.

Alana doesn't look very happy. Nonetheless, when Hannibal offers to walk her out, she goes quietly, leaving Will and Abigail alone in the dining room.

Abigail fidgets anxiously and catches his eye. "She's really mad." She whispers like it's a secret.

Will nods dramatically to make her giggle, which in turn makes him smile. It's nice to see her so relaxed with him now, even if it's just the *sedative–that–has–yet–to–be–named* doing all the work. "She's not mad at you." He assures her. "Or me, really."

This seems to relax her a little.

Hannibal re–enters the room with more grace than someone who absolutely just got royally chewed out should, and takes his place at the head of the table between the two of them. "Alana Bloom would like me to relay the message that she does not approve." He says, mostly to Will, but he and Abigail share a secret glance that Will pretends not to notice. They're full of secrets, these two, but that doesn't stop Will from wanting to know them.

"Bet she doesn't." He retorts with a smirk of his own.

Hannibal looks very pleased.

They begin plating and pouring drinks with Will helping, and it's only after they've sat down that Will looks up to see Abigail watching them both with wide, enlightened eyes and a watery, happy smile. She looks almost serene as her gaze darts between their faces and the family meal to be had.

Will's arm moves without his permission like he wants to reach across the table and touch her arm, but he quickly stops. Whatever's going on inside her head seems… *precious,* and he's wary to shatter it, but he can't help but say her name in a low, concerned tone.

"What is it?" Hannibal asks her, noticing her strange trance.

Abigail does not reply. Like she's too happy to speak.

"Abigail, what do you see?"

And Abigail Hobbs just grins widely at the two of them like she's never been happier and replies with clarity and finality: *"I see family."*

Will's chest suddenly goes very tight.

Abigail sees family.

His Rougarou sees a pack.

Dinner actually surprisingly well after that, despite how out of it Abigail is throughout. They kept the conversation safe, most likely for her sake, and despite her drugged state, she answers well. However, she's so tired by the time Hannibal clears dessert that she's practically falling asleep over her plate, and Hannibal tells her to go lie down in the living room. She goes without a fight and is probably asleep before her head hits the arm.

"So, you gonna tell me what you *really* gave her?" Will asks a little later while he's got his arms in the sink full of soapy water.

"Mushrooms." Is the instant reply. He doesn't sound embarrassed at all, which is a little horrifying.

Will's mind is reeling. Fucking *shrooms?* "Why?"

Hannibal gives him a rather thorough explanation of his antics with insightful facts about psilocybin use with traumatized patients, positive associations, and tampering with brain chemicals. It's, unfortunately, a good answer, even if it isn't the whole truth. Will's familiar enough with Hannibal's manipulations that look like mercy.

"And?" Will presses once Hannibal's little speech is over. He's met with a questioning stare, so he adds: "Did it work?"

Hannibal smiles and finishes drying the plate in his hands. "I believe it did. Abigail seems more at peace now."

"She's passed out on your sofa."

"And nightmare–free, I have no doubt." He sounds so fucking pleased with himself.

Will shakes his head and tries to hide his own smirk. “I should be… *so* mad at you right now.” He grumbles, his voice wavering with the amount of force it takes to squash down his amused laughter. “Mushrooms. You gave a seventeen-year-old girl *mushrooms.* I cannot fucking believe you.”

Hannibal blinks in response, suddenly the perfect picture of innocence.

“Don’t worry, I’m not gonna tell on you.” He assures him, nudging Hannibal with his elbow.

“I am forever in your debt, Will.”

He snorts. *Yeah, you absolutely are, you impossible, murderous little…*

“As Abigail is unlikely to awaken for some time,” Hannibal interjects his internal tirade. “Would you like to discuss the case?”

All of the amusement quickly drains from Will’s body and he suddenly feels very interested in the dishes. He hadn’t really wanted to discuss it, but since he’s here…

So, he does. He goes through the entire day from start to finish, telling Hannibal of the connections between the boys and why they were chosen by the Mother. They’re not even doing dishes anymore, just choosing to stand face to face in the kitchen while Will rattles off his tale and Hannibal listens.

“Found families are often thought of as less significant due to there being no blood relation,” Hannibal says when Will is finished. “Many cultures across the world would bed to differ. Found family units can be equally as vital. I cannot argue with her logic.”

Will nods solemnly. “She had a family before. Husband, kids, all that. They couldn’t handle her obsessive attention, so he left her. Took the kids with him. The kids decided to keep their distance from her, so… she tried to form a new family. One where they would all love her, be devoted to her, and never betray her.” He tries not to think of Abigail on the sofa and her hushed little declaration at dinner. Was that Hannibal’s game? He isn’t sure he wants to know really.

“Your mother was absent in your life.” Hannibal notes. “Was your father much of a family man?”

Will thinks of the lonely nights he spent as a child. His father was always exhausted and most nights he would drink until he fell asleep, then would be gone all day to work. As a teenager, Will helped in the boatyards, but there were no tender family moments. Nothing beyond the occasional *‘good job, Willy’* or a shared, quiet dinner of pizza on the floor of the boathouse. That loneliness settles like cement in his stomach. Will turns his gaze away. “Not in the strictest definition.” He answers tightly.

Of course, that vague answer won’t satisfy Hannibal, and sure enough, he digs the wound a little deeper. “What sort of father would you be?”

“An impossible one.” He meets Hannibal’s eyes and sees the curiosity burning there. “I had a vasectomy in 2008.”

Hannibal’s eyebrows raise. He seems genuinely surprised by this. “That is a very definitive decision.” He says curiously.

Will sighs and drops his eyes to the floor. “It wasn’t an easy one.”

It hadn’t been. Once he learned that his curse could be passed down genetically, the idea plagues Will’s mind for weeks. He wouldn’t wish this on anyone, especially a child who has no choice in the matter. Sure, it’s not like there were people lined up outside Will’s door waiting to take him to bed, but he wasn’t going to live a life of celibacy either, not even out of necessity.

It had taken almost two years to actually make his decision. Many nights of doubt, insecurity… and mostly just grief that didn’t make sense. Will had never really wanted a family, it was never his thing, but having even the possibility be taken away? It hurt more than it should have.

Jules understood. She had her tubes tied a few years after she got the bite for that very reason, no matter how much she didn’t want to. She wanted a family more than anything. *“I have my brother,”* She had said through tears that neither of them wanted to acknowledge. *“Maybe he’ll meet someone nice and have kids and then I can be an Aunt. And if not… well, I have him.”* Then she had looked to Will with a sad little smile and said: *“And you, I suppose.”*

Will hadn’t replied, hadn’t really known how.

Hannibal is watching him still, his dark gaze sharp as a blade. It’s like he’d give anything to know what Will is really thinking. There’s a question burning in the amber of his eyes. Will doesn’t know what it is, but he’s certain he’s not going to like it.

“Go on, ask your question.” Will sighs.

“I hesitate to ask for your benefit.” He replies, at least having the decency to look scandalized, even if it’s complete bullshit. “Has meeting Abigail reshaped your feelings about your decision?”

The question is utterly jarring, and shocking. It hits Will like a cannonball has been launched through his belly because Hannibal is, once again, more intuitive than he should be.

He clears his throat uncomfortably. “Sometimes.”

“Then it appears that we are the same.”

“Are we?”

Hannibal dips his head. “Feelings change with new associations.” He says this so mildly, but there’s a glint of something raw in his eyes when he speaks, and Will can’t help but look. He can’t help but feel like they are no longer speaking about Abigail Hobbs at all.

It doesn't feel like flirting. Somehow it feels like… *more.* It feels like something dangerous and damning, more than the Rougarou curse, more than killing…

Rougarou mate for life. If your wolf has his sights on this guy, you have two options; ignore it and walk away, or let yourself have it.

He should be ignoring this. Walk away before he makes a mistake he can't correct. Before Hannibal learns what Will knows about him. Before Hannibal realizes the truth about Will.

Before Will Graham admits to himself that it's no longer just his wolf that can't let Hannibal Lecter go.

The air between them is unbearably tense now, so thick that maybe even his claws couldn't cut it. There's still a smile on Hannibal's face, one too intense to be friendly, and it makes Will's heart pound.

"I… guess they do." He answers a little hoarsely, holding Hannibal's gaze. "I find my feelings for… well, a lot of things really… A lot is changing for me. I'm… starting to wonder if that isn't such a bad thing."

Hannibal smiles, bright and blinding, and Will finds himself smiling too. Inside his chest, his monster is almost purring. Something monumental has shifted now. There's no going back.

The moment doesn't last long, even if it feels like it goes on for centuries. Hannibal picks up their half-empty, discarded glasses of wine and hands Will's over. He probably guessed that Will is feeling awkward and needs to occupy his hands. It's a welcome distraction, even if adding *more* alcohol to the mix is a terrible idea. He takes the glass anyway.

In an attempt to steer the conversation from Hell back to something safe (or *safer),* Will clears his throat and swallows down the satisfied growl that's working its way up. "What about you?" He asks.

"Me?"

"You ever been a father?"

Hannibal pauses with the glass of wine halfway to his lips and lowers it slowly. Something Will can't decipher passes over his features for a second, quickly hidden by layers and layers of masks. Will doesn't like it.

It takes him a moment, but finally, Hannibal says in a very quiet voice: "I was to my sister. She was not my child, but she was my charge. She taught me so much about myself."

The detached way he says it is very telling. Will feels his stomach tighten. "Was?"

"She's dead." Hannibal doesn't look at him this time. He keeps his gaze averted and low on the floor in a way that is dignified and prideful. It doesn't look like grief, if only because Hannibal would never allow himself to be so vulnerable.

Will can picture her in his mind; a small, beautiful, baby-faced girl with blonde hair and bloodstained eyes that match her brother's. Hannibal loved her more than the waking world, that much is clear, even if he didn't understand how or why he did.

Will can relate to that.

Meeting someone, be it a sibling or a friend, and having the entire world shift beneath your feet under the weight of what you feel for them is terrifying. Everything you've built for yourself, everything you've tried to hide out of necessity or fear of rejection suddenly just… doesn't seem relevant anymore.

"What was her name?" Will asks with caution. This moment seems so fragile and he doesn't want to break it.

"Mischa." He says her name so quietly, like a prayer or a secret. Will wonders if this is the first time he's spoken it aloud in years.

Will holds up his glass of wine. "To Mischa."

A genuine smile dawns across Hannibal's face, and Will can't help but return it. He raises his own glass and lightly taps it against Will's. Their eyes remain locked as they both drink.

Abigail was still dead to the world by the time they finished, so after two unsuccessful and rather comical attempts at rousing her, Hannibal simply slid his arms underneath her slender frame and carried her to Will's car. Will, in turn, tried very hard not to stare too hard at the way Hannibal's muscles flexed under his crisp dress shirt when he got her situated in the passenger seat and harder still to force down the heat rising to his cheeks.

"Thank you for tonight, Hannibal," Will says once the door is shut and Abigail is snoozing against the window. "That was the best time I've had in a while."

Hannibal's answering smile makes his heart flutter. "I feel the same. An intimate gathering is far more fulfilling than some of the lavish events."

Will is about to make a joke about his ridiculous dinner parties when Hannibal takes a half-step toward him, right into his space where their shoes are nearly touching and Will has to look up to see his eyes. His breath catches in his throat at how intensely Hannibal is staring at him, and even though his natural fear is telling Will to take a step back, he's rooted where he stands.

"Would it be… *inappropriate* to request a repeat so soon?" Hannibal asks.

"I don't think Alana will *ever* go for that."

"Indeed not." He agrees. Bloodstained eyes flicker all over Will's face as if he's committing it to memory. "Perhaps just the two of us then?"

Will swallows hard. Nervous excitement is making his body feel like a live wire. “Just the two of us.” He repeats.

“If you would like.”

“I… *would* actually. I would like that.” To his surprise, Will actually means it. “I’ll look at my schedule.”

It was, apparently, the correct answer because Hannibal’s joy radiates outward, curling around Will’s skin like a warm blanket. “As will I.” He purrs.

They’re so close now, like they’ve been leaning closer while they’ve been speaking. Will’s eyes keep flickering down to Hannibal’s lips while he talks.

Will wants to kiss him. Very, very much.

He doesn’t.

He clears his throat, takes a step away, and offers a polite smile that feels like an apology.

Hannibal doesn’t look disappointed, or at least if he is he doesn’t show it. His pupils are so dilated that his eyes are more black than amber. He wanted to kiss Will too.

It’s getting harder and harder to resist you, Will thinks. *I see you reaching for me and I keep reaching back, even though I shouldn’t. There are too many secrets between us right now.*

But that doesn’t mean I don’t want this. Because I do. And maybe it’s time I stopped lying to myself about it.

“Goodnight, Dr. Lecter.” He murmurs, his voice wavering with unspoken emotion.

“Goodnight, Will.”

Halfway down the road, Will wants to punch himself in the fucking face. He’s slipping. He’s being so, *so* stupid about this, and the worst part? He *knows* it. He knows it and just keeps doing it.

It’s not even really about Hannibal being the Ripper anymore.

It’s him.

Will isn’t even *human.* He parades around as a man. He talks like a man, he thinks like a man, he kills like a man, but Will’s humanity is stretched as far and thin as snow in Louisiana. Will Graham is the boogeyman that wakes children in the night with screams and tears. It doesn’t matter what type of monster Hannibal Lecter is because he is, at his core, a man. A monstrous one, but a man nonetheless. His body houses the Devil’s spirit, but Will’s curse grew out of the ground and transcended stories and superstitions. They are not the same.

Hannibal Lecter's adoration would vanish like smoke if he ever knew the truth. He would hunt Will like sport if he knew what he was.

And even if Will is wrong, it's too big of a risk. For everyone.

During therapy next week, he will end this… *whatever* between them. Set the record straight.

It's not you, it's me.

Sounds pathetic even for him.

Will exhales the tension from his body and tries to ignore the feeling of a crack forming in his chest.

It's for the best. Best for everyone.

Abigail lets out a sleepy little groan to his right, and he briefly turns to see her rubbing at her face like a child, and it brings a fond smile to his face. She glances over and her eyes are still glassy and unfocused. She may not even be truly awake right now, but when she recognizes him, she smiles back. "Where we goin'?"

"Hospital, kiddo," Will says, turning his eyes back to the road. "Past your bedtime."

She huffs indignantly. "I hate that I have a bedtime."

"I know you do. It won't be forever though."

Abigail hums then leans her head back against the window and goes silent like she's fallen back asleep.

Then, after a few minutes of quiet, she whispers: "I'm glad you came tonight."

Will's chest goes tight and he can't help but look over at her in the passenger seat in shock. She has her eyes closed so she doesn't see him, and it takes him a second to look away. He hadn't been expecting that at all, and while it blooms with warmth and fills him with a sense of happiness, it hurts. It *really* hurts.

Hannibal Lecter and Abigail Hobbs may actually be the death of him.

Still, Will is touched by what she said. He nods even though she can't see him and swallows down the thick emotion that's threatening to choke him. "I am too."

He is, even if he really shouldn't be.

There's another long pause, then Abigail shifts to look out the window, and quietly says: "Full moon."

Will's mind blanks out with pure icy panic. He whips his head over to look up at the sky, his heart pounding so furiously it's threatening to come bursting out of his chest, *it can't be, it*

can't—

It isn't.

He nearly goes lightheaded with relief as he straightens up and tries to breathe normally again. His heart is still racing and his palms are sweating against the steering wheel. "Almost." He tells her in a voice that is perilously close to cracking. He clears his throat in hopes she won't notice.

Thankfully, Abigail doesn't seem to realize that she nearly just sent her designated driver into cardiac arrest. She hums appreciatively. "She's *so* pretty."

"Yeah, she is."

And as Will continues down the road toward the hospital and Abigail dozes peacefully against the window, a nagging, sinking feeling forms in Will's stomach. It starts out small then grows and eats at him for several miles until his festering anxiety solidifies into disbelief that quickly blooms into fear.

He's so fucking stupid. In all these years, he's never… *oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck.*

Will has been so preoccupied with Hannibal fucking Lecter that he's made a potentially detrimental mistake. The full moon is in two days, and he never asked Jack for time off. He *always* asks for at least the following day off to recover, but he's not a teacher anymore. He's a profiler too, and serial killers tend to *love* the full moon. He was supposed to ask for two days off and he fucking *forgot.*

He'll just have to call in sick. It's his only option this late.

He just hopes that everyone will leave him the hell alone. Namely, handsome serial killing Doctors.

Fuck knows what he would do then.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: The full moon and hopefully, some other things you will enjoy.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

TW: Brief mention of homophobia, and semi-graphicish descriptions of an animal's death. Will kills a bear.

Hello!!!
Sorry it's been a minute, but I hope this chapter makes up for it!! I'm so, SO excited for this one, so please let me know what you think! For those of you who have read "do not fear the big bad wolf", the oneshot that spurred this entire fic, this chapter is going to look a little familiar, but if you haven't read that one and you would like to be surprised, you do not have to read the other fic first. Things will be explained if you just want to reading this first. <3

Anyway, y'all, please enjoy!!
Canary<3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The full moon always brings a fever. The day of, Will burns hotter than humans should, covering his face in a sheen of sweat and giving him chills that mimic tremors, so his earlier catastrophizing ended up being pointless because Jack told him to stay home the moment he heard Will's croaky voice through the phone.

He spent the day preparing. He prepared food for his dogs, took a long, hot shower that released the tense muscles in his neck and shoulderblades, then curled up on the floor to work on his engine project to pass the time while the morning dipped into the afternoon and the sunlight became greyer and darker as night approached.

The higher the moon rises, the more Will can feel it. His monster. His *Other.*

The Rougarou settles in the base of his spine and crawls his way up, making his skin feel too tight, almost like chains. The tremors become violent convulsions. Will's skin ripples and tears at the seams.

When the moon is full, the change is painful.

Will forces his way to the bathroom and shakily removes his clothes. No use in ruining them. They go right into the hamper, even if he misses with the shirt and it tumbles to the floor. He doesn't care.

The dogs are used to this by now and they know to remain calm, even if Will's distress is obvious and makes them whine when he stumbles past them on his way to the door. He's so feverish with the curse that the cold air feels like bliss against his burning skin, but Will

doesn't get further than the porch when a violent shudder brings him to his knees in the snow. He swallows down a pained scream and lifts his head to the sky. The moon illuminates the blue–black abyss. She's beautiful.

A loud, animalistic growl erupts from Will's chest as his bones shatter and rearrange under his flesh.

It's time.

The Rougarou's meal doesn't put up much of a fight, but then again, they so rarely do. It was easy to choose her after he witnessed the drunk, belligerent woman throw her beer bottle at a young lesbian couple trying to enjoy a nighttime picnic date in a West Virginia park. All he had to do was wait for her to stumble past him.

He tore her throat open first using his massive claws so that she couldn't scream. She wasn't going to live long enough for the curse to take hold of her. Will dragged her through the woods, deep enough where no one would see, and devoured the wretched thing within minutes. He's still licking marrow and blood from his nose, even now.

With his hunger satiated and the full moon quota filled, Will takes to the woods. He runs, relishing in the feeling of a full belly and the freedom this form brings. His sense of direction and time tells him that he's somewhere close to the Virginia state line, though there are still several hours until dawn, so he won't go home just yet.

He stops at the river and drinks from the stream then just stares up at the moon for a while in contemplation.

Will Graham is a killer. A righteous one, perhaps, but a killer nonetheless. He tore into that woman with ease, like the drug dealer from last week, the one before that, and the one before that one.

And he liked it.

Likes, he corrects himself.

He killed Garrett Jacob Hobbs and he liked it. He loves the feeling of blood on his hands (or paws), loves the way they look when they know they're about to die. The power no longer feels monstrous; it feels… *good.*

Hannibal would be proud.

He wonders what hunting with Hannibal would be like. Would Hannibal take the lead, or would he simply sit back and let Will stalk their pig, so long as the wolf didn't ruin his choice cuts? The idea sends a shiver down the Rougarou's spine. It almost makes him hungry again.

One of these days, Will vows. *I'll tell you everything. I want you to know me. See me.*

He knows it's a dangerous line of thought, but Will can't deny it anymore.

He's just in love. Stupidly, passionately, dangerously in love.

Jules was right.

A rustling sound from behind startles Will out of his thoughts, and the Rougarou swings around with bared teeth. A large black bear pushes its way through the bramble, huffing and bristling at the sight of another large predator in the area.

Please don't make me fight you, Will wants to tell it. *It's not worth it.*

He growls, warning the bear to back off, but naturally, it does not. The animal charges and Will charges right back.

They meet in a clash of claws and ragged snarls. Running directly into a bear, even in this form, is similar to hitting a concrete wall. Will forces the bear back several paces but is met with a slash from his opponent's claws across his neck. Internally, Will lets out a curse, then snaps his teeth in a warning growl before biting down on the bear's massive shoulder. The Rougarou's fangs cut through his flesh like butter.

The bear barks out a sharp protest and stumbles, giving Will the room to back away and run if he wanted to, but by now the adrenaline from his slaughter earlier and the solidification of his feelings for Hannibal has fire blooming to every single atom of the Rougarou's lethal form. He tackles the animal to the ground using his paws to keep it pinned.

A powerful hind leg delivers a solid kick to Will's abdomen. Its large claws draw blood and the Rougarou howls, drowning out the snarling bear. The wolf's jaw opens, showing off sharp, hungry fangs before he tears into the bear's throat as he had with the woman in the park.

Gurgling barks and pained whines pound against Will's eardrums. Killing this animal doesn't feel like killing the woman.

He won't let the animal suffer. It wasn't his fault.

Will kills him quickly with a raking swipe of his enlarged claws, then backs away, limping slightly because of the wound on his leg. He sucks in harsh, ragged breaths as the fight instinct finally begins to dwindle.

I'm sorry, he thinks toward the bear, feeling slightly guilty. *I had to.*

Will doesn't spend a lot of time catching his breath. The bear did a lot more damage than he had anticipated, and there are only a few more hours until sunrise, so he grits his teeth and begins the long trek back to Wolf Trap. The running hurts, pulling at his aching muscles and his torn skin, and exhaustion begins to creep up on him the longer he goes.

By the time he breaks out of the treeline in his yard and the sanctuary of home is mere yards away, Will's body feels on the verge of collapse. His vision is swimming, the house looks like three. He drags himself through the cold snow on trembling legs and bleeding paws.

The window he left open on purpose taunts him when his body goes lax and the world goes dark.

The next time Will becomes conscious, the sun is shining. He can see the orange hue behind his eyelids, can feel the heat on his face. Gradually, he becomes aware that he is still in his wolf form, which is why the ice and snow beneath his body hadn't woken him before; his fur has kept him warm.

His body still hurts. His muscles feel like they've been overstretched and the gashes on his side from the bear's claws sting and burn in the cold, as do the ones on his neck. There's a cut on the pad of his right paw that's been aggravated by the journey here. He feels like he's been hit by a fucking train. He lets out a pained, agitated whine.

Will needs to get up. He needs to go inside, curl up with his dogs until his Rougarou blood can fix his wounds (much faster than in human form), and then take a hot shower. Maybe call his favorite delivery place and eat his weight in pizza. Sleep for a year.

God, but *everything* hurts and he hasn't even got the energy to change back right now, let alone get up and walk to the goddamn front door. He will. Just not yet. Fighting a *literal* black bear was admittedly harder than he thought. It's his fault, really, for being so distracted with his waning moral compass and—

Will's body goes rigid.

There are footsteps approaching. Human ones, crunching across the snow on his lawn toward him.

He's been noticed. *Seen.*

He takes a breath in, scenting the air. The fur at the back of his neck stands straight up. That scent… that warm, spicy cologne.

Fuck.

His heart starts pounding, thundering against his ribcage. If he could sweat, he would be.

Fuck, fuck, ***fuck.***

Will's eyes shoot open, zeroing in on the figure in front of him. The world goes utterly silent.

Hannibal Lecter freezes where he stands just a foot or so away. His face is expressionless, vacant, but there is a tightness around his eyes that Will doesn't think he's ever seen before. He can't quite describe it as worry, but it would make sense that he's a little freaked out by the giant fucking *wolf* in Will's backyard.

The wolf that also happens to be *Will himself.*

(Will tries not to think about how that look on Hannibal's face leaves a sour taste in his mouth. He understands why Hannibal might be nervous around him right now, but one possibility he never considered is that instead of wrath or bloodsport, Hannibal could end up just… fearing him. Somehow that hurts worse than the idea of rage.)

The keen, predatorial eyes of the Ripper scour every inch of the Rougarou's form and his expression does not betray a thing. Has he already figured it out? Does he think Will is just another dog (albeit a large, wolf–like one), the newest addition to the pack? Will can't tell and it's not helping to squash the panic attack trying to make its presence known.

Suddenly, Hannibal takes a step forward and Will flinches back out of instinct. *Don't,* Will thinks as loud as he can. *Don't get too close, I don't want to hurt you, Hannibal. Please.* If he panics, he might not be able to control the Rougarou's urge to fight, even if it *is* Hannibal here. An involuntary, distressed whine escapes his throat before he can stop it.

Hannibal doesn't move again, but he doesn't look away either. "I am not going to hurt you," He says gently.

Will's eyes flutter closed at the sound of his voice. He's missed that voice. It's only been a few days, but *fuck,* Will missed him. So much.

"I would like to help. Will you allow me to help you?"

He can't help it. He lets out another soft whine. Will wants to scream, but it's all he can muster at the moment.

Snow crunches closer to his head just as Hannibal's broad shadow lowers over his body. Will opens his eyes to see his friend crouched beside him. He's trying to make eye contact and even in this form, Will can't give it to him for long. Hannibal eventually turns his head to look at the slashes on his flank, at one point even reaching out like he wants to touch but he stops a few inches from Will's fur.

His scent turns acidic just as Will sees the conflict pass over Hannibal's face. He *is* nervous, perhaps even afraid, though it's hard to tell because of how closed off he is.

It hurts worse than any of the cuts on his body. Hannibal being afraid of him is decidedly the worst feeling in the world. Will really must be a monster if even the Ripper is scared of him. His Rougarou cries out softly, already in mourning when nothing has actually happened yet.

Hannibal's eyes dart back up to his, widening slightly. They burn with liquid amber and curiosity; Will can feel him reaching into the back of his wolf's skull, attempting to pry him open. It's terrifying, thrilling, and Will doesn't know if he wants to force him to stop or allow Hannibal to finally *see.*

An electric feeling floods the air—Hannibal's intrigue, his powerful, Holy devotion to the interesting and the terrible has become a solid entity in the small space between their bodies.

"Will?"

The choice has been made for him; even if he doesn't understand, Hannibal sees.

The Rougarou holds his gaze. His breath gets lodged in his throat which does not escape Hannibal's notice. He leans closer, seemingly unafraid of the Rougarou's teeth.

"Will?" He repeats with a twinge of something close to desperation which thickens the accent around the name.

He should lie back down. Growl and make Hannibal run the other way for both of their sakes.

"I have my brother," Jules said to him over a decade ago now, during their first meeting when they spoke of the loneliness of the curse. *"Who do you have?"*

For so, so long, the answer was always the same. Nobody. Will Graham has spent most of his life alone. Then this nearly insufferable, devastatingly beautiful devil of a man drops out of the sky, creating an atomic bomb–sized hole in the surface of Will's life. This monster is made of flesh and blood, not molded by an ancient curse like Will but equally as untamable and deadly.

And Will loves him. God fucking help him, but he does.

So, even though his heart is pounding and Will is more afraid now than he's ever been, he summons his courage. He doesn't remember closing his eyes, but he forces them open and allows his mind to open for the Ripper to look inside.

See me. I want you to see. See that I'm not a threat to you, see that I'm still just me. You know me, Hannibal.

See me, Hannibal.

And Hannibal *does.*

Will sees the moment the realization dawns on him, the way his lips part with awe, and the blood red of his irises glitter in the sunlight. He looks rapt, shocked, but whatever fear Hannibal may have had seems to have disappeared like smoke. He looks… *happy,* almost. Relieved, even, which makes very little sense, but Will doesn't care. He's just as happy as Hannibal looks.

Hannibal smiles at him then, and says a little breathlessly; "You certainly neglected to mention *this* in your sessions."

That's what you're gonna open with? Will thinks a little hysterically. He scowls as best he can with a wolf's face and Hannibal just smirks at him, but his eyes are still a little starry.

His hand comes to rest on Will's torso, exploring the chocolate brown fur with his fingers. There's a bruise there and it hurts when his thumb accidentally brushes against it, but Will grits his fangs and forces his body to relax into Hannibal's touch.

“We must get you inside,” He says with a doctor’s calm authority. “Are you able to stand? I will help to steady you.”

He has a point—Will has been in the cold all night.

It takes a moment of breathing through clenched teeth, but eventually, Will is able to stand and walk with Hannibal’s help. The house is warm, it feels like bliss even against Will’s coat when they finally get inside and Hannibal shuts the door.

Seven regular dogs rush the door like a small army the second Hannibal manages to get it open. Will is immediately assaulted with wet noses and anxious whines on his behalf. They still know who he is, even like this. He soothes them with a gentle huff and a flick of his tail and the nervous sea parts for their pack leader to pass.

By the time Will gets up and onto the bed, he’s halfway to falling asleep again. His house is so warm, not to mention Hannibal Lecter’s luminous presence. He hadn’t anticipated how much weight his secret held until now, because now that Hannibal knows this truth and is *still right here,* Will Graham feels lighter than he has in months. Years even.

Hell, he may even sleep without nightmares for once.

With this happy little thought in mind, Will crawls up onto his shitty mattress. Sheets be damned.

“Do you allow animals on the furniture?” Hannibal inquires immediately. His tone is neutral, but there’s a lilt to it that proves he’s trying not to laugh at his own little joke.

Well, I let cannibals into my house, Doctor, and that is arguably worse. He thinks, turning his large head around to glare at the handsome asshole who starts smirking as if he can already tell Will is being rude to him in his head.

Hannibal’s smile doesn’t fade when he follows it up with: “I shall retrieve my medical bag from my car.”

Will lets out a huff to acknowledge that he was heard then flops down onto his belly and lets his eyes fall closed. He hears Hannibal breathing in the quiet room for a moment, possibly just watching Will settle down, then he leaves.

It’s okay though. He’s coming back.

And Will is never going to let him go.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal knooooooooows!!!

Up next: Our boys finally get a chance to talk.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

HELLO EVERYONE!!
I am so, so, SO sorry for the long delay on this. I've been so busy with health problems and other projects that I was having issues with this chapter. But I'm BACK, and here we are!! Thank you all so much for your continued love and support. I know I haven't responded to comments yet, but I swear I read and cherish every single one of them. You're all amazing, you keep me going, and I hope you never forget it.
Now! Onto some notes! For those who have read the oneshot that started it all (do not fear the big bad wolf) this is going to look familiar, though I have edited the dialogue a bit!
Hopefully the next chapter will not take so long! Please see the end notes for more info!!
Love you all!
Canary <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I suppose we should set up a line of communication, as you are unable to speak verbally at his given time,” Hannibal says as he unpacks the contents of his medical bag on Will’s freshly cleaned and cleared nightstand. “I will stick to yes or no questions only. Blink once for yes, and twice for no. Does that sound simple enough?”

Frankly, Will’s so tired his eyes are falling shut on their own so it may not be the most foolproof idea, but he blinks once to indicate he’s on board.

Hannibal nods, then takes a slim flashlight and flicks the light over the cuts on Will’s flank. His fingers card through his thick brown fur, the touch clinical yet tender. Will isn’t used to being touched. Hannibal does it a lot and gets away with it when he would shrink away from anyone else.

“Do you have an accelerated healing factor?” Hannibal asks, tracing a finger down one of the freshly scabbed-over marks.

He blinks once in confirmation. Technically, he only heals quickly in this form; the moment he’s human again his healing slows down to normal. It’s one of the many, many downsides to the curse.

Nonetheless, there’s a smile on Hannibal’s lips and a prideful glint in his eyes. “You really are quite remarkable, Will.”

Will’s chest goes tight. He never realized how much he needed to hear Hannibal say that until the words actually came out. If it weren’t for the *remarkable* evidence to the contrary, Will

would wonder if this was all a dream.

“I apologize, but this will most likely hurt.” Will glances up to see Hannibal holding up a rag and a bottle of soap–based cleanser. “I would appreciate it if you didn’t bite me.” He finishes with a playful glare.

The Rougarou returns that challenging stare, suddenly sparked back to life by the lighthearted taunt from an equally matched predator. Hannibal takes the challenge in stride, complete with a chuckle that almost makes the wolf smile back. The elation that arrived with Hannibal Lecter’s acceptance makes Will feel almost giddy, but of course, he’s going to push.

The Ripper knows he’s only (partially) kidding.

Minutes go by in near silence while Hannibal works. Will tries to keep still as much as he possibly can despite how much the disinfectant stings and burns, but each time he twitches away, Hannibal drags his thumb over his fur in soothing circles. Will is so tired he can’t help but lean into those strong, steady touches. *Hannibal’s touch.*

It’s fucking surreal.

Just as he’s drifting in and out of sleep again, Hannibal brings him right back to the present with; “Is this the first time you have experienced this transformation, Will?”

Internally, Will sighs. The question is within their basic yes or no parameters but it’s frustrating that he can’t explain right now. He lifts his head and blinks twice to indicate *no.*

“Then, I take it, you will be returning to human form at some point?”

Blink.

“Does anyone else know?”

Oh, please, Doctor, you think I could explain this to anybody? Will scoffs, blinking twice.

“Well then, as a doctor, and as your friend, I cannot simply leave you in a vulnerable state, so if you are amenable,” Hannibal says, looking pleased as he loosens the tie from around his neck. “I would like to stay here until you have… returned. Would that be alright?”

As if Will would let him leave now. Instead of blinking, the Rougarou nods his large head so that Hannibal understands, then shuffles slightly to the right to make room on the off chance that his Doctor will take the hint and crawl in beside him. He lets out a tired breath and closes his eyes, letting the exhaustion build up behind his eyes to drag him under.

Faintly, he hears Hannibal say something about calling Jack to say that he is still very ill and to more or less leave him alone. He’s too tired to feel bitter about the fact that Jack will listen to Hannibal when he doesn’t listen to Will. It’s not Hannibal’s fault he’s a shameless bullshitter and an exceptional liar with luminous charisma and dazzling charm. But, now at least, no one will bother them.

A warm, tender touch to his side feels like coming home, especially when Hannibal starts caressing him like he was petting a dog. It feels good to a mortifying degree and Will isn't quite sure if it's the animal part of him that loves it, or if his human side is so starved for touch that he doesn't mind, but nonetheless, it isn't long before Hannibal's soothing touch draws him into a peaceful, dreamless sleep.

The very first thing Will becomes conscious of is that he has never felt so comfortable in his own bed before. His various healing injuries strike him second but it doesn't take away from the sense of tranquility that has rendered him carefree enough to ignore the nagging sensation that he is also being watched.

Well, almost ignore it.

He opens his eyes slowly, and all he sees is Hannibal.

Hannibal who stayed. Hannibal who knows his truth and accepts him. Hannibal who currently has a soft, sleepy smile on his face like he's just so happy to be here. Will wants to touch his face but settles for a smile instead. He still doesn't know where they stand even though they woke up in bed together.

"It appears," Hannibal says, his voice rough with sleep. "That we have slept the day away."

Will sighs as the world comes back to him and he quickly realizes that it's getting darker out. "I figured I would. I didn't expect you to stay in bed with me."

"It was not my intention. I apologize for invading your space." He chuckles.

"Don't you always?"

Will closes his eyes again and settles back down into the warm bed, comforted by Hannibal's presence, ready to—

Oh fuck.

His eyes fly open as a terrible thought strikes him. He's human again, having changed back during the night, and now he's lying in bed with Hannibal Lecter without a shred of clothing on. He sits up to cover himself, jarring Hannibal, but is relieved to find his lower half covered by the blankets.

"Will? What is it?" Hannibal demands, alarmed.

"Thank fuck, I have a sheet." He breathes, collapsing back down and turning to see his friend's startled face. "Did you tuck me in?"

Hannibal narrows his eyes like he's trying to remember, then settles on: "If I did, it was not consciously."

Thank God for that.

“I don’t… I uh…” Will groans and scrubs at his face with his hand, hoping his blush is not as evident as he thinks it is. “I am *very* naked. And you’re in my bed.”

Maroon eyes blink at him, slow and cat–like, unbothered and seemingly unsure what the issue is here, but after a brief but intense staring contest, Hannibal smiles. “I will go to the kitchen and prepare us each a cup of coffee if you would like to get dressed.”

Will grunts out an affirmative but secretly watches Hannibal uncurl himself from the bed and rise to his feet in one fluid motion. His clothes are slightly rumpled from their nap and there are a few lingering wolf furs stuck to the expensive fabric of his suit pants which makes Will smile to himself. He watches Hannibal leave the room, eyeing his broad, muscular shoulders and tries not to blush again.

Once he hears the clattering of dishes, Will slips out of bed and pulls a pair of jeans from the floor to cover himself. He’s lucky enough to have a flannel in the living room, which he grabs on his way into the kitchen, but the closer he gets, the more this… *all* of this, begins to feel wrong.

Now that he’s awake, he knows he and Hannibal will have to talk. Hannibal will have questions, naturally, and because there is no point in lying, Will has to tell the truth. And not just about himself; he has to tell Hannibal that he knows his secrets too, and try not to get killed while doing so. The evidence suggests that Hannibal will be thrilled, but his sense of self–preservation may overrule that, should he see Will as a threat instead of an ally.

He’s still trying to imagine what to say when he stumbles into the kitchen and Hannibal has two mugs of coffee set on the table. They sit down at the same time and silently sip at their drinks for several minutes. Hannibal is giving him time to organize his thoughts, Will knows, but he will not be the one to break the silence first.

“I feel like I should be doing the walk of shame.” Will finally says, scrubbing a hand over his face.

“What do you have to be shameful about?” Hannibal asks, cocking his head.

“Oh, lots of things.” He counters. “Mostly waking up naked in bed with my therapist who now knows the worst about me.”

“I am not your therapist.”

“Yeah, that’s what we should focus on here.”

Hannibal smirks at that. His eyes travel all down Will’s body as if he’s enchanted, and Will knows he can’t hold this conversation off any longer.

He takes a deep breath, then says: “I’m not a werewolf. Not exactly.”

If this surprises Hannibal, he doesn’t say; he just leans forward a little more. “What are you?”

“I’m a Rougarou.”

This time, the Ripper's confusion is evident in the way his eyebrows furrow just a fraction, but otherwise, his face remains neutral.

Will's heart begins to pound. It feels wrong to say this aloud after being bound to secrecy for so long, even *(especially)* if that person is Hannibal Lecter.

"Rougarou, or Loup-garou, depending on where you are in Louisiana, is a Creole legend. Translated, it basically means a man who… who can become a wolf or wolf–like creature. The Louisiana Werewolf."

Hannibal, who loves a history lesson as much as Will, evidently, remains still, but his eyes glint with excitement.

Throwing caution to the wind, Will continues; "Our legends go back hundred and hundred of years, as early as Medieval Times in France. Stealing children, destroying farms, killing livestock… the usual monster activities." *Horror movie stuff,* he almost says. "There were witch hunts for Rougarou. They would find someone who was acting strange and put them on trial to be condemned."

Hannibal seems to consider this. "How successful were those attempts?"

Will snorts, almost offended. "Not very. Rougarou are incredibly hard to catch." He says this with a pointed look and can almost feel the approval emitting from his friend when he does. "That was a long time ago, though; nowadays we haunt the bayous now more than we haunt the Parisians. The Catholics believed the Rougarou would come after them if they did not follow the rules of Lent, so even though they feared us, they used us as tools to make people obey. And, in later years, we became stories to scare children into behaving." He scoffs, and this time it sounds bitter. "As if we would care about any of that."

"How did this happen? Is it in your bloodline?"

"No, thank god. It can be hereditary though if one or two Rougarou decide to mate. If you aren't born with the gene, you turn with a bite or a scratch, which do different things. If they scratch you, you'll take on the Hollywood werewolf traits, bi–pedal, running on instinct alone, and generally no memories when you wake up human. The scratch is temporary too; a hundred–and–one days and it's gone like a bad case of Epstein–Barr. If you're bitten though…" A wicked feeling swirls around under Will's skin, making the long–faded bite mark on his torso twinge with dull, burning pain. He shudders. "You've got the wolf in you for life."

"I take it, then, that you were the victim of a bite?"

Will nods, then tells Hannibal the story from start to finish; the Clawed monster in the woods over ten years ago who was rude enough to interrupt his vacation with a chase and a curse. By the end of it, Will feels raw like he does at the end of most therapy sessions, but yet somehow lighter, as if finally, *finally* being able to speak about this has lessened the weight on his shoulders, no matter how much venom spews from his lips when talking about his creator.

“Did you know right away that you had been infected?” Hannibal asks once he’s finished.

“No. It took about another few weeks before I… Before I changed for the first time.”

“Last night was a full moon. Is that what—“

“I can change whenever I want.” Will cuts him off, then shrugs. “I just don’t have a choice when the moon is full.”

Hannibal doesn’t say anything right away, and when Will looks up he notices that he’s watching Will absentmindedly run his fingers over a large, mostly–healed gash on his forearm from the goddamn bear. Embarrassed, Will picks up his coffee again, making Hannibal’s eyes dart back up to his.

“Do you often come back to yourself wounded?”

That is one question Will hadn’t been expecting and for whatever reason, it makes him laugh. “Uh, no. Not usually.” He says, snickering into his drink.

Hannibal waits, expectantly.

“I uh… I was fighting off a black bear.” He explains a little sheepishly. “I don’t like to hurt the wildlife, but he hit me first. He got a few good hits in before I took him down. I was able to get home, but I was exhausted, which is why you found me where you did.” He glances back up but can’t quite catch Hannibal’s eyes. “I’m actually glad you found me. I would have woken up naked in the snow and you can imagine how well that would have gone for me.”

“Thankfully I was here.” Comes the surprisingly terse reply. It’s laced with thinly–veiled menace as if the idea distresses some ancient, long–since–buried part of Hannibal’s heart. Just as Will is readying himself to ask, he’s interrupted by yet another question; “When you are in your wolf form, what do you do?”

His stomach churns unpleasantly and for a second, Will feels his body go into suspended animation. This is the tricky part where there are no rules and no barriers to hide behind.

“I run.” Will says after a long, pregnant pause. It’s easier to start simply, and it’s not like he’s lying. “I’m much faster as a wolf because we have enhanced speed, so sometimes I just… go.”

Hannibal seems oddly intrigued by this. “Where do you go?”

“Anywhere I want. No border patrol can stop me, and I’m faster than any car. I can tackle any terrain. I can go *anywhere.”*

“These moments of escape are not to be despised. They come too seldom.”

Will sends a strained smile over the table, either for the assumption Hannibal is making or the use of a Virginia Woolf quote, he isn’t sure. “What makes you think I’m escaping?”

“Are you not?” Hannibal challenges him. “You use your animal form to run away from the darkness and horrors that you face as a human being. Running away is not a freedom that you currently have. It is your way out of dark places.”

“You don’t think turning into a literal monster is a *dark place* in of itself, Dr. Lecter?” He all but snarls back, making Hannibal’s eyes glint. “Have you actually read monster legends? Ever seen a monster movie? Being a Rougarou isn’t freeing, it isn’t glorious; it’s damning. Especially for…” Will stumbles, sucks in a sharp breath. “For *them.”*

Just like that, the energy in the room shifts. Will’s hands are shaking now around the mug, causing the coffee to ripple and slosh up the side, and he sets it down while he tries to gather his thoughts.

Hannibal, strangely, isn’t saying a word. Like so many other times before, he is waiting for Will to speak first, to tell him what’s kicking around in his skull without prompt. It’s the exact opposite of the Hannibal who pokes and prods to his heart’s content, and Will isn’t sure if he’s grateful for the change or not.

Nevertheless, he has confessed. Indirectly, perhaps, it wasn’t quite *“forgive me Father, for I have sinned”,* but the way Hannibal is staring at him, overly observant, calculating, and with sparkling interest, it’s obvious he already knows where this conversation is heading.

“Wolves are hunters, Doctor,” Will utters, keeping his voice neutral. “So are Rougarou. But we don’t hunt deer, or elk, or rabbits.”

The impenetrable mask flickers. Will watches as the predator nestled safely beneath Hannibal’s skin ripples like an agitated pond. Hannibal shifts slightly in his chair, straightening his spine and slowly tilting his head to the side to appear thoughtful. Will finds himself mirroring the position.

Under Will’s breastbone, his own monster grows unsettled, prowling around in a circle, keeping its eyes fixed on the Ripper.

The Ripper takes a breath, then purrs: “And what do you do with the people that you hunt, Will?”

It feels like a knife to the chest, and Will tries very hard not to flinch. He holds Hannibal’s gaze no matter how powerful that barrier of darkness resting behind his eyes makes him want to drop it. Will’s lungs are burning, he’s been holding in a breath for far too long, probably even before Hannibal asked the question. He can’t remember how to exhale. All there is is Hannibal.

The kitchen no longer feels like a kitchen; Will feels like he’s standing in a field in some Southern town, the sky above a furious grey. The air is electric with the promise of thunderstorms, and just there, beyond the edge of the stalks of wheat, a cyclone is forming, already swallowing livestock, fallen branches, and unchained bicycles, coming closer to where the two monsters are hiding.

Will lifts his eyes, capturing deep maroon across the table. “The same thing you do, Doctor Lecter.”

Lightning strikes the table, splits it in two, causing sparks to fly and fires to spread to the drying plants around them. The Stagman emerges from the flames, untouched, unburned, and unbothered. Hellfire can’t stop him.

Hannibal is eerily still and unblinking, but his mask is firmly back in place. Will can’t tell what he’s thinking at all.

It’s terrifying.

Deep in his core, Will knows that Hannibal is thinking about killing him. He isn’t stupid enough to think that he could be safe.

“My body can tell the difference between meat that came from an animal and meat that did not.” He explains gently, just to break the silence.

Hannibal’s head tilts down just a fraction of an inch. He understands the implications of this.

Will nervously rubs his hands across his thighs and forces himself to breathe.“Rougarou, um… we have to consume humans. As a human, I can eat anything, but going without a hunt for so long is… painful. To put it lightly.”

“The hunger?” Hannibal asks, surprising him. He doesn’t at all sound like someone who was just (correctly) accused of serial murder and cannibalism by a werewolf (throwing stones in a glass house). His words are heavy but they aren’t fighting words.

A spark of hope releases some of the tension in Will’s shoulders and he nods. “It’s… it’s an ache in my teeth.“ He says, swiping his tongue over his canines that pulse at the mere mention of a hunt. Hannibal’s eyes track the movement in understanding. “I used to try to hold back, but the more you resist, the worse it gets. The ache spreads into your throat, into your stomach, you feel like you’re being ripped inside out. And sometimes… Eventually, it becomes too much and the Rougarou decides for you. You have no choice. In the old days, hungry Rougarou would massacre whole villages. Killed their neighbors, families, simply because they tried to resist. Tried to stay just that little bit more human.”

Will did try once, stayed in the woods for three days while the pain in his jaw and the savage hunger nearly drove him out of his mind. Until that poor hunter went by just a little too close to his campsite, already wounded from a tumble down the rocks. Will couldn’t even feel guilty when he tore through his chest cavity and devoured his heart in one bite, he was just *so hungry.*

Hannibal was an orphan once, a long time ago. He has to understand that type of hunger.

“I knew what you were the first time you brought me breakfast.” He murmurs.

“You referred to the meal as *‘delicious’* if I recall.”

There’s an accusation there, but Will won’t fall for it.

“Because it was. It always is.” He can taste the spices in his mouth already, just imagining the beautifully presented meals. Will drags his tongue over his teeth again to soothe the ache. “Eating with you… it’s surreal. Because it’s the only time it doesn’t hurt.”

Hannibal’s eyebrows knit together, and Will didn’t know better, he would say that he looks offended. “You had the opportunity to take me down, but yet you did not because I was useful to you. How very convenient, Will.”

Oops. Definitely offended.

“That’s not what I meant.” He argues, flames heating up his cheeks.

“Would you care to elaborate then?”

“I didn’t turn you in, Dr. Lecter, because I don’t want you to go to prison.” Will bites back. “I know why you kill, you know that I do. Being what I am, it was easier to see you. You stand in front of these pests that you’ve captured and you rip into them while they’re still breathing because they are *nothing* . The only difference between us there is when I kill some back alley rapist, I don’t turn him into a gory *La Madonnina* for Jack to find.”

“I suppose you leave no evidence behind?”

“Sometimes. But, clean up is a little hard when I rip them apart.”

Hannibal looks almost proud when he leans forward and asks: “And how does it feel to rip them apart?”

“It makes me feel alive.” Will replies without thinking, then promptly has to look away. Who knew the Ripper’s praise would be so addictive? “At least, it does now. I have you to thank for that.”

Across the table, Will hears Hannibal’s breath catch. Again, he goes very still, just staring at Will with nothing but blankness, giving nothing away.

Just a little, Will opens his mind and seeks out Hannibal’s eyes. Just a *little,* he pushes past the sound barriers of his psyche and allows the Doctor’s thoughts to seep into his own.

It’s euphoria. A thrill so vibrant and prevalent that the hairs at the back of Will’s neck stand on end. The Ripper has finally found an equal, someone worthy of sitting in front of him and playing Chess, someone the Devil himself admires. But under all that, there is an unshakable feeling, the closest that such a beast could come to feeling trepidation. Getting so close to another forms a pressure point, and Will Graham is the Ripper’s only weakness, and that alone should be a reason to sever them. To end this now before the Ripper can’t escape, before he no longer wants to, and all his years of solitude, all of his principles, it all becomes null. Before Will can change Hannibal, as Hannibal has changed him.

Will pulls himself to the surface and takes a deep breath to steady himself. His heart is absolutely *pounding,* he’s surprised Hannibal can’t hear it. His head spins.

He was correct before when he said Hannibal could be afraid of him. He just didn't realize that it was because Hannibal had fallen in love too, possibly for the first time in his entire life, and such a loss of control is enough to bring him to his knees.

Don't be afraid of me, Will wants to say. *Give me all of you and I will worship you. Let me love you and then let me show you how powerful we can be.*

The distance between their bodies suddenly seems like miles; Will reaches out and covers Hannibal's hand with his own, squeezing gently. "Don't you get it?" He asks, though it sounds like a plea. "You made me see the beauty in what I could do. I couldn't tell you before because I figured if I told you I was a cryptid that ate people, you'd have me committed on the spot." He pauses, narrowing his eyes thoughtfully. "Or you would have killed me. Either way, I lose."

A crack forms in the mask, and for one brief moment, Hannibal looks vulnerable. Distressed that he is at Will's mercy, wanting to embrace this, but frustrated when he can't. He doesn't say a word, but twists his wrist around, taking hold of Will's hand and stroking over a set of scars on his knuckles.

Will can't help it. The moment Hannibal responds to his touch, no matter how innocent or chaste, a full–body shiver goes down his spine.

"You responded similarly this morning." Hannibal softly notes, repeating the motion with a knowing smile.

Memories of his tail thumping against the bed make Will blush and he digs his nails into Hannibal's palm with disapproval. "I can't help it. It feels… *good."*

"I do not mind. I actually was quite flattered." Hannibal assures him with a hint of amusement. "You do not receive touch often as a man out of choice. Is it less unappealing as a wolf?"

"Uh… no, not really." Will says, trying very hard not to laugh though his face is on fire. "I just… I like it when *you* touch me. I'm surprised that you didn't figure that out sooner."

Hannibal laughs, *genuinely* laughs, which proves to be infectious. A kiss is pressed to the back of Will's knuckles, then he says: "I did not want to push my affections on you if they were unwanted."

Will scoffs. *You ridiculous monster.* "Hannibal, I don't think there is a universe where I would be able to resist you."

Then, simply because he can (and before he can second–guess himself), Will gets up from his chair, rounds the table, takes Hannibal's face in his hands, and kisses him.

Hannibal responds ecstatically. His hand comes up to cradle the back of Will's neck with enough possessive force that it overwhelms Will's senses. He stands without breaking the kiss, softly growling while his tongue swipes against sharp teeth and backs Will up against the table when he gasps helplessly in response.

Will has never been kissed like this. Not that he's really been kissed all that much, but not one of them has ever, *ever* felt like this. It's hungry, obsessive, and territorial, with just enough affection and tenderness to prove that Hannibal does not kiss him with violence in mind; but love. Hannibal's love feels like Hellfire and Holy Water. He tastes like coffee, spice, and something forbidden that tempts Will to no end.

It feels like coming home.

Will lets himself melt, moaning softly and dragging his blunt nails down the back of Hannibal's neck and shivering when his monster growls at him hungrily, then continues to devour him. His body is coming alive and he feels like he's about to burst if Hannibal doesn't take him to bed right this fucking *second,* but another part of him is not willing to rush this. Not yet.

Finally, they break apart, panting and gasping into each other's mouths while they rest their foreheads together and try to re–center gravity around them. Hannibal's hand strokes reverently through his hair, pulling gently on the curls at the base of his neck. Will doesn't bother to hide his pleased, content hum.

"You're really okay with this?" He asks eventually, once he's got his breath back. It's ridiculous considering what they just did but after all these years… Will needs to be sure. "You still want me even though I… despite what I am?"

"Not despite," Hannibal leans down to kiss him again, chastely, but no less passionate, making Will sag a little in his arms when his head suddenly feels lighter than air. "I want you *because* of who you are, Will. You beautiful, brilliant thing."

Jesus. He sighs almost dreamily and, impossibly, doesn't feel embarrassed about it. "I'm not good with words like you, but… the feeling is very, very mutual." Then as an afterthought, he adds in a warning tone: "You should be careful though."

"And why is that, beloved?" Hannibal purrs close to his ear, sending a delectable shiver down his spine.

Will pulls back with a wicked grin that shows off his sharp, dangerous teeth before diving back in for another kiss that speaks of blood, lust, and devotion. "Because, Rougarou mate for life, Doctor Lecter." He growls against his mate's lips once they part. "Once you're mine, you're *mine."*

Hannibal's eyes darken to the color of blood and his grip around Will's body tightens as if he wants to absorb him whole. The hand in his hair jerks Will's head back and Hannibal attacks his throat with his teeth, hissing out a sharp moan when Will gasps and shivers in his arms. "As if I would not slaughter anyone who thought to take you from me." He vows, capturing Will's lips before he can say a word.

God, Will loves him.

The aggression softens into something sweeter and reverent, and soon they're no longer trying to consume each other whole. Their bodies are molded together while they trade

languid kisses and allow their hands to explore. Finally, Will rests his head against his chest, listens to Hannibal’s heart and his steady breathing, and closes his eyes. Hannibal tucks him against his collarbone and just holds on tight.

He’s never been so happy.

“Stay with me tonight?” He whispers against Hannibal’s pulse point. “I want to show you what I look like in the moonlight.”

Hannibal’s heart skips under his lips, and when he speaks again, there is no mistaking his excitement.

“How could I refuse?

Chapter End Notes

And part one of this story has officially drawn to a close! If you would like to read about Hannibal's first time seeing Will change, please enjoy Phobos and Deimos, the third story in the series. It's a little oneshot and it will be mentioned in the next chapter but I will not be adding it to this story just because I have other things I would like to cover. Link below!

https://archiveofourown.org/works/41127213

End Notes

Comments feed Will's dogs. <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!